LANGUAGE DISADVANTAGE

The Learning Challenge in
Primary Education

Dhir Jhingran
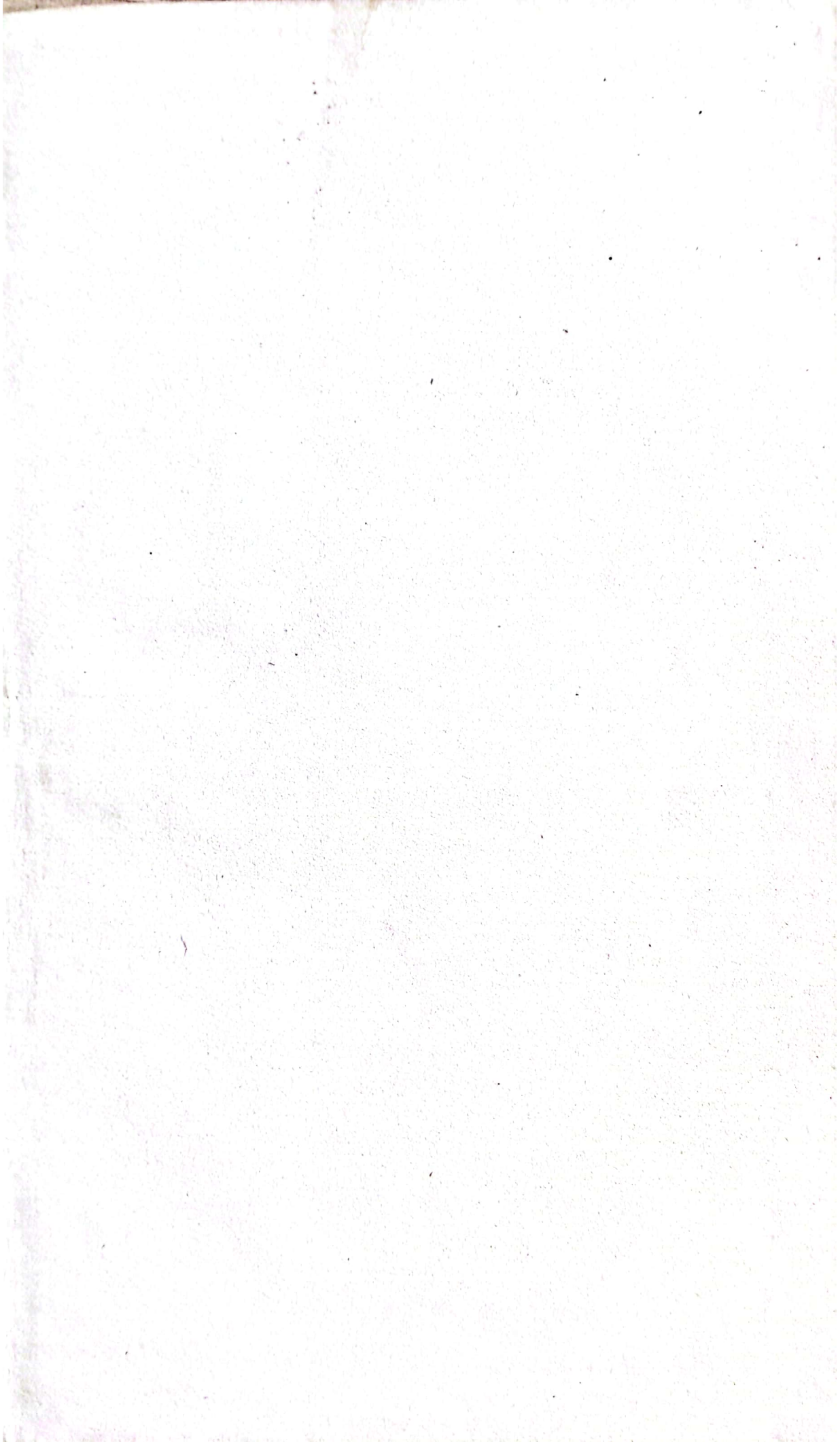
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The right to quality elementary education is now being recognized as the guiding principle of all government initiatives. But, in practice, a significant proportion of children are deprived of an 'equal opportunity to learn' at the primary stage of schooling. Children who join school with a first language that is very different from the one used as the medium of instruction at school, face a serious disadvantage in the early years that stunts their learning at school. Barring a few sporadic pilot initiatives, the education system has failed to respond to this huge learning challenge. This study argues that the learning disadvantage is not confined only to tribal children who are totally unfamiliar with the school language at the time of joining school. Children who speak dialects that are very different from the standard language used at school, children of migrants and those residing in inter-state border areas are similarly disadvantaged. The findings of the fieldwork for this study have helped to provide a flavour of the nature and extent of this problem.

This study outlines some successful educational strategies that have been implemented in other countries to help children who suffer due to the gap between the home and school language. Some of the initiatives under government educational programmes in India have also been outlined with the objective of learning from the problems in their implementation. The author identifies some appropriate educational strategies for the various school situations in India and discusses some issues in the planning and implementation of such initiatives.

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To My Parents
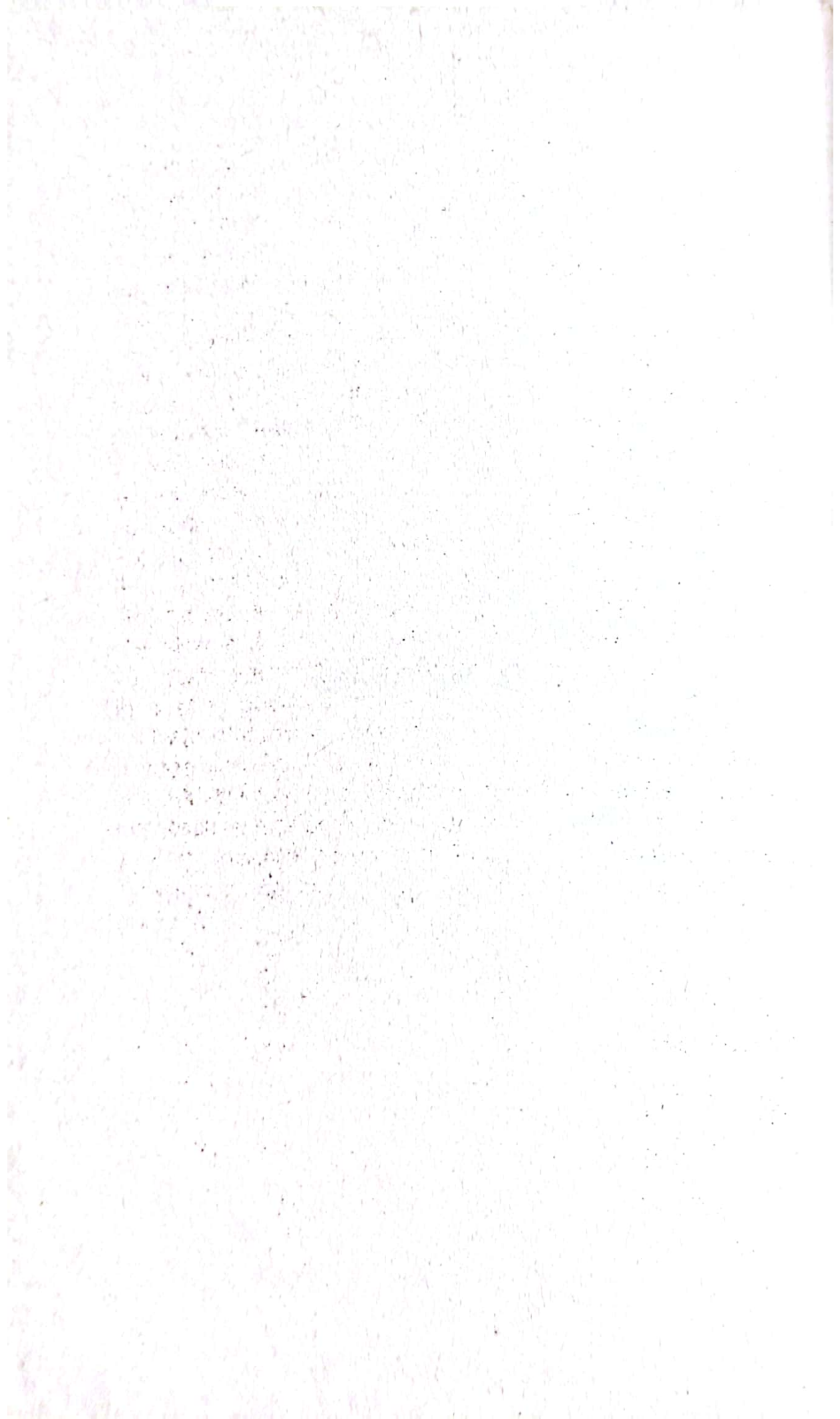
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the outcome of a year's study undertaken by me. I had been discussing the serious issue of the learning problems faced by children who study through a language that is unfamiliar to them in the early years of primary school, with some colleagues who have been working in the area of elementary education. Our work under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan at the national and state levels in the past ten years had made us acutely aware of this issue and we had grappled to initiate some action to reduce the burden of non-comprehension of such children. Our sporadic initiatives and discussions with educational policy makers, administrators and academicians clearly brought out the fact that there is little understanding of this issue within the education system. Information on successful educational strategies implemented in other parts of the world to help children of minority language speakers is also not easily available in the field. I decided, therefore, to work on a document that would discuss these issues and possible solutions in the Indian context.

As a first step, a team of four researchers undertook fieldwork, during 2004, in four states to provide an objective assessment of the nature and extent of this problem. Following the fieldwork, the findings were discussed in a workshop at New Delhi. This formed the basis for the Indian context of this issue. The three other researchers (apart from me) who conducted the fieldwork and also put together three case studies are:

The views expressed in this book are my personal views and are not, in any way, indicative of the government's policy or stand on the 'language in education' issue.

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INTRODUCTION

The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher's monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some alphabets had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice. Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the alphabets from the blackboard. "My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorise them. But only two of the grade 5 students can actually speak Hindi", said the teacher.

This is a classroom in a primary school in a remote tribal area in Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh. The situation in schools in tribal areas in most parts of the country is similar. This kind of non-comprehension of classroom instruction is common in schools in non-tribal areas too, where the children's first language[1] (language that they can speak well and use to communicate) at the time of entry into schools is very different from the language used for instruction. Such children face a 'double disadvantage' of having to try and learn an unfamiliar language and to simultaneously attempt to understand new information and concepts being thrown at them in this unfamiliar language from the first day at school. The traditional teacher-centred language teaching methods which do not allow scope for communicative interaction and children's participation further exacerbate the problems of these children. The fact that many of them manage to continue through the primary stage of schooling, and learn something, is nothing short of heroic!

Apart from poor cognitive development, children who study through a language that is very different from their first language, also face problems of social and affective development and typically have low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. The use of an unfamiliar language and a completely alien setting in the textbooks can be very disturbing for young children. Jim Cummins argues that, "rejecting a child's language in the school is like rejecting the child. When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is, *leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door,* children also leave a central part of who they are-their identities-at the schoolhouse door. When they feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction."[2] Some impressionistic assessments of the low educational status in tribal areas have argued that the 'language problem' is the most important factor for the high drop out rates of children in the first few primary grades in these areas.

The learning difficulties faced by children who come from a different first language background depend on several factors, such as the level of intelligibility of the language used as the medium of instruction the socio-economic background of children including literacy level of family members, exposure outside school to the standard language used at school, motivation to learn the school language, the teaching methodology adopted at school in the early grades and the attitude of the teacher towards these children. Clearly, the children facing learning problems on account of their language background do not form a monolithic group. The severity of the disadvantage and its impact on their cognitive and emotional development varies from one situation to another. In simplistic terms, we could describe the level of disadvantage based on a combination of the above factors as low, moderate or severe.

Since very little data is available in the country on the children's first language (in which they are proficient at the age of 5+, when they first enter primary school) and on the other

aspects mentioned above, it is difficult to make any reliable estimates of proportion of children facing various levels of disadvantage. Based on Census data, some socio-linguistic surveys and interaction with education planners all over the country, it is felt that almost 25 per cent of all primary school going children face a moderate to severe learning disadvantage owing to their language background.

About 10-12 per cent of all school going children face a severe learning disadvantage. There are children whose first language is entirely different from the medium of instruction and who have a deprived socio-economic background with little exposure to the school language.[3]

Who are these children?

i. Children belonging to scheduled tribes (ST) who speak the tribal language at home, especially those living in remote, tribal dominated areas.

ii. Children who speak a language that is considered a 'dialect' of the regional language, and have a very low comprehension of the standard language used at school. Many of these languages are actually quite different from the regional language and cannot be called dialects. For all practical purposes, the school language is a second language for these children. Bundelkhandi, Bagheli and Maithili are considered dialects of Hindi, though they are really different languages and many children speaking these languages have no comprehension of standard Hindi when they first come to school.

iii. Children of migrants who are living in a state that has a different official language and those residing in inter-state border areas who have a different language as their mother tongue, also do not get the facility of studying in their own language. In such areas, a very limited number of primary schools may be available that offer the children's first language as the medium of instruction. But usually middle and secondary schools are not available in that medium, forcing parents to enroll their children in schools with the

regional or state official language as the medium of instruction.

iv. Children whose first language, though a written and well-developed language, is not used as the medium of instruction at school. This is of course a very diverse category including speakers of Sindhi, Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri, Konkani etc. (The issue of the demand for Urdu as the medium of instruction is a complex one and is partially addressed in Chapter 7).

It can be said with conviction that such children do not have access to an 'equal opportunity to learn'. At this point in time, when the guiding principles of educational progress in the country are 'education for *all*' and 'right to *quality* basic education', it is surprising that the serious problems faced by such children is not receiving any attention at all. It appears that the 'rights perspective' and the stress on learning by *all* children is still more rhetoric than reality. The Rights framework that guides bilingual education programmes in the United States is a study in contrast and guarantees special support for children who belong to linguistic minorities. Of course, the policies and interventions in schools in USA have been weak and inappropriate and bilingual education has been a much-debated issue in that country.

The political leadership at the state level in India has had an equivocal stand on this issue. In certain states, there has been hostility to suggestions for introduction of more languages as mediums of instruction. Promoting the use of a multiplicity of languages could threaten the emotional integrity and the feeling of 'we-ness' among the residents of one state, it is argued. Publicly, the socio-cultural leadership of most tribal groups has also generally taken a stand favouring the regional/state language as the medium of instruction.[1] Some initiatives for mother tongue instruction in the early grades of primary education with the objective of transition to the state language in the later grades have faced opposition from tribal socio-political organizations who argue that such a step would lead to greater

isolation, marginalisation and continued backwardness of the tribal population. In fact, in the North-eastern states, as also in some other parts of the country, tribal groups have been demanding introduction of English as the medium of instruction at the primary stage of education.

Another reason why this serious issue has not been highlighted enough is the simplistic assumption that since children learn a language easily, they do not face a problem in learning a second language. While children may be able to learn to speak a language easily when they have adequate exposure to it and they are motivated to learn it, learning of a second language for academic purposes takes much more time and systematic instruction. The fact that the development of the children's first language has a crucial role in the acquisition of the academic form of second language is not known to educational policy makers, administrators, teachers and parents.

It is also erroneously argued that children in our country are usually bilingual and therefore have some understanding of the language used as the medium of instruction. As we shall see later, this is rarely true for 5-6 year old children of deprived backgrounds (who get little exposure to the standard language in their home settings).

One of the most seemingly convincing arguments given to explain the lack of initiative in addressing the needs of such children is that there are far too many languages and dialects in each state. Many of these languages not even written or standardised, and it would be an impossible task to work for the development of so many languages for their use in education. This argument is unsustainable in the light of educational programmes implemented in some small countries with linguistic diversity comparable to that in India (*see Papua New Guinea's programme outlined in Chapter 5*).[5]

This aspect of lack of conviction and commitment would need to be addressed first, if we want to make headway in

improving the learning opportunity for children who are presently studying in a language that is not their first language.

Legislative/legal backing for educational interventions for linguistic minority students in USA

1. The US Supreme Court in the Lau versus Nichols case held that "if students do not understand English, they do not have equal access to quality education, even if they have the same facilities, books, curriculum and teachers" and that schools must take **affirmative steps** to help students who do not speak English.

   Most states have enacted legislation relating to the right of linguistic minority children to have access to special educational interventions like transitional bilingual education courses. These programmes are offered based on a survey of the language background of children and language assessments of each student.

   The 'No Child Left Behind Act, 2001' federal law seeks to establish accountability of states, districts and schools for achievement levels of students, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups like limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities and delinquent children. It provides for a comprehensive and transparent mechanism for regular assessment and monitoring the progress of such children in each school. Schools where the academic performance of such children is low, would receive additional technical and financial assistance, but if the performance of the school does not improve in three years time, the school would face sanctions and compensatory arrangements would be made for the children. Despite such a mandate, interventions in schools have been of a limited nature and of varying quality. Bilingual education has remained a controversial strategy in the USA.

The Provincial Education Ministers' Conference in 1949 and the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961 had resolved, in no uncertain terms, that "whenever there are at least 40 students in a school or 10 in a classroom speaking a particular mother tongue that is different from the regional or state

language, teaching would have to be done in the mother tongue of these children by appointing at least one teacher". This resolution has remained virtually unimplemented.

A review of the education policies, strategies, instructional arrangements and research in the area of elementary education clearly indicates that this issue has not been addressed seriously, even in the past one and a half decades when primary education has received much greater attention and financial support than ever before.

The Programme of Action (POA), 1992, based on the National Policy on Education (1986) mentions the provision of Article 350 A of the Indian Constitution which directs that every state and local authority shall endeavour to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.[6] There is no further mention of this issue in terms of policies or strategies in the entire document.

During the 1990s, several primary education programmes, including the innovative District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), did place a lot of emphasis on improving the quality of education. One of the major objectives of DPEP was to improve achievement levels of children by 25 per cent. However, most of the planning, implementation and monitoring of quality issues remained confined to the provision of inputs like new textbooks, teaching aids, teacher training and regular academic support to schools. Learning achievement surveys (on sample basis) were conducted in every state under DPEP but they merely provided aggregate assessment of students' performance. These could not bring out the learning difficulties and lower learning outcomes of children learning through a second language.

Surprisingly, the fairly large number of classroom observation studies conducted in several states also did not highlight this crucial issue that is responsible for low achievement of students in many parts of the country. Had teachers, field

level academic personnel, programme managers, teacher educators and researchers focused on the learning processes and undertaken systematic, disaggregated analysis of students' performance, the issue of serious learning disadvantage faced by children studying through a second language would have been thrown up much more strongly.

Strategies to address the quality of the teaching-learning process received a lot of attention under DPEP. Sadly, the focus has been entirely on promoting joyful, activity-based teaching-learning practices through the delivery of large, uniform programmes of teacher training and introduction of revised, child-friendly competency based textbooks. While this objective was unexceptionable, it diverted attention from the reality of highly diverse classrooms and the need for differentiated approaches to address the issue of learning. While new methods of teaching language and other subjects have been stressed through these programmes of 'pedagogical renewal', the assumption has almost always been that classrooms are monolingual and children speak and understand the language used as the medium of instruction. A review of the content of teacher training modules across states shows that the issue of difficulties faced by children learning through a second language has rarely been mentioned, leave alone addressed effectively.

This study is supported by the findings of a limited fieldwork that was undertaken during 2004 in four states viz. Assam, Gujarat, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This work included identification of the linguistic diversity and the types of school situations based on the first languages of children, the teachers' language proficiencies and the mediums of instruction in each state and one identified district and block in each of these states. In addition, detailed classroom studies were undertaken in eight primary schools in these states. A district profile has also been developed for one district each in the states of Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. The team that took up the fieldwork in four states included people who had worked for large education programmes (DPEP, SSA) at the sub-district, district, state and

national levels on issues of quality improvement in primary education. An outline of this fieldwork is available at Appendix I and II.

In the assessment of the team that undertook the fieldwork, there is very inadequate understanding at all levels, viz. school, academic clusters, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), State Programme Offices of DPEP and SSA and the state education departments about the extent and nature of this problem.[7] There is even lower awareness of the possible educational strategies that can be implemented in the different kinds of school language situations. The DIETs, SCERTs and state education department personnel have remained pre-occupied with the huge workload of teacher training programmes and textbook revisions. They have also shied away consciously from opening up this issue of mother tongue instruction as it is *perceived* to be politically sensitive and largely infeasible, given the large number of languages and dialects spoken in almost every state of the country. There is also an unsubstantiated feeling that there would be popular opposition to the introduction of mother tongue instruction.[8] More importantly, most of the education department personnel are quite insensitive about the 'mother tongue' issue. They maintain that children largely know the regional language or pick it up quickly at school. They believe that the number of children who face a serious problem is small, for whom it is not feasible to devise special educational strategies. Teachers in most states, however, seem to be more acutely aware of the problems in teaching such children.

Unfortunately, even after a decade of experience of implementation of educational programmes that focus on quality improvement and learning enhancement, national and state policies and programmes, primarily the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is the Indian government's flagship programme for universalisation of elementary education, do not reflect this issue as a concern to be addressed on priority basis.[9] The

international initiatives for Education for All, beginning with the 1990 Jomtein Conference and including the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, have completely ignored the need for improving educational opportunity for children who go into school speaking a language different from the language used at school. Only two reports, viz. UNESCO (1953) and UNESCO (2003) draw attention to the need for mother tongue instruction.[10]

Sadly, research in education has also by-passed the problems faced by such children. The large body of literature, in recent years, including surveys analyzing the reasons for dropout and low achievement levels of students has not identified the almost un-surmountable hurdle faced by children learning through a second language as a reason for their 'lack of interest in studies' and low performance levels.[11] There has been very little research in India on the process of acquisition of language or even evaluation or documentation of the few initiatives that have been tried out for children who are studying through a second language. Research in linguistics has been presented in a specialised manner that is not comprehensible to educational planners and policy makers. Linguists and academicians in the area of primary education have rarely worked together on addressing the problem of such children.[12]

There is an influential viewpoint that maintains that the right to learn in the mother tongue is a linguistic human right and mother tongue education needs to be promoted as recognition of this 'fundamental right'. Proponents of this viewpoint also argue that many oral languages are under threat of extinction and one way of preserving them is to use them in school. However, we would not take up the linguistic right issue in this report, but confine our analysis to the impact of language used for education on children's learning and overall development.

There have been some feeble, tokenistic efforts at the national and state levels in the past to address this issue, but none could be sustained. These include the development of primers in tribal languages on a bilingual transfer model, use

of alphabet-word cards in the local language, translation of grade 1 textbooks into tribal languages to help the teachers use the equivalent words in the local language, development of tribal language dictionaries, and training of non-tribal teachers for learning tribal languages. Most of these have remained as innovations and experiments that never took strong roots.

We, therefore, felt that there is a need for advocacy among political leaders, education policy makers, planners and administrators, activists working for effective implementation of the Fundamental Right to quality basic education, linguists, educational researchers and national, state and district level institutions responsible for quality improvement initiatives in elementary education to mobilize opinion and action for addressing the serious situation where children of minority languages are being deprived of an equal opportunity to learn. Apart from drawing attention to this highly neglected issue, this study presents important research findings and outlines of successful strategies that have been tried out for addressing the needs of children whose first language is very different form the major regional language. It also contains some suggestions about educational strategies that can be used in various kinds of school situations across the country. Diverse strategies would be required in the very diverse conditions available in our country. Also, it may be necessary, in the interim, to implement strategies that may not be 'educationally' perfect. For example, an *ideal* approach for transition from the first to the second language may require a strong foundation in the first language for three to four years before 'bridging' to the second language. Ideally, the transition should be delayed as much as possible. However, many states may decide to implement approaches that plan for an early transition from the children's first language to the state language. But, even this 'imperfect' move would be a great step forward from the present situation and should be supported.

This study has not looked into the issue of the teaching of languages as subjects. Thus the entire controversy regarding

the Three-Language formula has not been addressed. This has helped to keep the focus of the study on the issue of language of instruction at the primary level.

Overveiw of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides a simplified overview of the linguistic diversity in our country by highlighting results from the Census, some other surveys carried out in the past decade and the fieldwork undertaken for this report. It brings out the complexity of the socio-linguistic situation in the country in terms of the variations in dialects, language used at home and outside, prevalence of link or contact languages, the extent of bilingualism etc. and the implications for the medium of instruction at the primary stage of schooling.

Chapter 2 attempts to categorise the diverse language situations obtaining in primary schools in our country. Thus, several school/classroom situation types have been delineated based on the dimensions of (a) first language of children, (b) the medium of instruction, (c) the classroom composition in terms of children's first language background, and (d) teachers' proficiency in the children's first language.

Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical perspectives and some research findings on issues like the importance of mother tongue instruction at the primary stage, the role of development of the first language in acquisition of a second language, appropriate classroom strategies for second language acquisition and the crucial role of reading and comprehension. It also attempts to compare the situation in Indian primary school classrooms with the appropriate strategies suggested in these theoretical perspectives and research findings.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the methodology for language teaching, language environment in classrooms and the performance of children of grades 1 and 5 in two schools each in the four states of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Gujarat and Assam. This is based on intensive fieldwork in one block and two schools in each of the states. The analysis brings out the disadvantage faced by children whose first language is very different from language used at school.

Chapter 5 presents a review of educational programmes in different parts of the world for children whose first language is not the official language of the region. These programmes are categorised on the basis of characteristics like their philosophy or assumption about the use of children's first language and the methodology of introducing the second language. Some educational programmes that have been implemented in situations similar to those in India have been outlined very briefly. The chapter also presents an appropriate strategy for bridging or transition to the second language.

Chapter 6 presents an overview of some of the initiatives in our country that address the issue of the learning disadvantage faced by such children. It includes only the significant interventions under government programmes. The limitations of these strategies have also been discussed.

Chapter 7 identifies various factors that should be considered while identifying appropriate educational strategies for different socio-linguistic situations. Some suggestions regarding appropriate strategies have also been provided. The chapter also identifies certain basic prerequisites for successful implementation of interventions for such children. There is also an attempt to identify certain issues that must be addressed in the conceptualization, planning and implementation of appropriate educational strategies.

NOTES

1. This language need not be their mother tongue, as commonly understood. This is the language in which children at age 5 or 6 have oral proficiency.

2. Excerpts from Jim Cummins, 'Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is it Important for Education,' www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/

3. This definition of first language (L1) of a child - the language a child can speak and understand well when he/she starts school - will be used throughout the book. Obviously, the first language of the child would be the language he/she speaks at home in the first few years of his/her life. It need not necessarily be the 'mother tongue' of that social/linguistic group.

4. The tribal groups of North-east India are an exception to this trend. A strong sense of group identity has motivated several groups to demand for their language to be used as a medium of instruction or at least taught

as a subject at the primary stage. Bodo is being used as a medium of instruction for several decades now, in Assam. It has also been included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 2003. Santals are also more assertive than other tribes on this issue.

5. Indonesia has approximately 700 languages and Papua New Guinea has more than 800 languages.

6. Government of India, *Programme of Action 1992,* (New Delhi: Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development)

7. In some states like Orissa and Assam, the understanding has been confined to a few individuals who have not been able to strongly influence state policy and institutionalize the pilot strategies initiated to help children whose first language is very different from the language used at school as medium of instruction.

8. Half-hearted, improperly implemented pilot interventions to introduce primers in tribal languages with little involvement of the community and tribal socio-cultural organisations have fuelled these impressions.

9. The SSA guidelines [Government of India, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: A Framework* (New Delhi: Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2001)], The EFA assessment for 2000 [Government of India and NIEPA, *Year 2000 Assessment: Education for All, India* (New Delhi: NIEPA and GOI, 2000)], The National Plan of Action for Achieving EFA [Government of India, *National Plan of Action, India* (New Delhi: Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2003)], do not mention this issue even in passing. Surveys like National Sample Surveys (NSS), National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), Social Assessment Studies under DPEP, Baseline, Mid-term and Terminal Achievement Studies under DPEP, the PROBE Report and a large body of research conducted by apex institutions like National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) have not reflected the magnitude and severity of this learning problem.

10. The CRC (UN convention on the Rights of the Child), ratified by 191 countries, does not include the right of a child to education in a language that he/she understands.

11. 'Lack of interest in studies' is a common category included in the reasons for dropout in several nation-wide surveys.

12. A Study on the problems of primary education in Dumka district of Jharkhand conducted by the Pratichi Trust has identified the problem of 'non-comprehension' among tribal children as a major reason for low attendance and learning achievement. In Andhra Pradesh, in a recent initiative, linguists, anthropologists and educationists are working together, for the first time in our country for developing primers for grade I in several tribal languages.

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

There is a bewildering variety of languages spoken in India. This immense linguistic diversity of our country poses a great challenge for the education system. Multiplicity of languages exists within every state and district. Even within the small geographical area of a block or a panchayat, there is often a variety of speech patterns.[1] During the fieldwork conducted for this report, the research team found that it is not uncommon to have two or more socio-linguistic groups represented in a village and the local school. The nature of this multilingualism and its changing, dynamic nature over distance and time has been highly researched, but rarely with a perspective that could help the designing of appropriate 'language in education' strategies. The focus of enquiry has rarely been children at the threshold of going to school at the age of five or six years.

The complex speech patterns in a particular area have implications for devising appropriate strategies for children in the early grades of primary school. Before we begin to discuss how the linguistic diversity or plurality of languages impacts on schooling at the primary stage, let us discuss some aspects of this diversity briefly.

1.1 MULTIPLICITY OF LANGUAGES:

The 1961 Census recorded 1952 'rationalised' mother tongues.[2] The 1991 Census listed 1576 such mother tongues. Out of these 1576 identified mother tongues, 216 of them had 10,000 or more speakers. 98 of these mother tongues had more than 100,000 speakers in 1991. The 1991 census data has grouped these mother tongues under 114 languages. The grouping of the mother tongues into 114 languages hides the much greater diversity of spoken languages. For example, under the language 'Hindi' such diverse languages as Baghelkhandi, Bhojpuri, Bundelkhandi, Chhattisgarhi, Garhwali, Lambadi/Lambari, Maithili, Nimadi, Rajasthani, Sadri/Sadan, Surjapuri etc. are included. About 20 languages (called mother tongues in the census analysis) grouped under 'Hindi' had more than one million speakers in 1991. Bhojpuri (23.1 million), Chhattisgarhi (10.6 million), Magadhi/Magahi (10.6 million), Rajasthani (13.3 million), Sadan/Sadri (15.7 million) under the Hindi group had more than ten million speakers. Many of these languages are written languages, some having extensive literature.

The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution has recognised 22 languages as scheduled languages (Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali were included in 2003). In 1991, speakers of scheduled languages (which were 18 in number), and including the speakers of all the mother tongues grouped under these 18 languages constituted 96.29 per cent of the population. Thus, less than 4 per cent of the population spoke one of the remaining 96 languages. With the exception of two or three languages, the remaining non-scheduled languages are spoken by scheduled tribes. As we have seen earlier, many of the mother tongues included under each of the languages are actually distinct languages. Thus the Census data on languages does not reveal the complex reality of linguistic diversity.

For example, Madhya Pradesh, which is generally known as a Hindi-speaking state (apart from the tribal pockets), has a language pattern (not including tribal languages) somewhat as follows (Table 1.1):

Table 1.1: Linguistic Pattern in Madhya Pradesh

S. No.	Part of Madhya Pradesh	Local, regional language (of non-tribal groups)
1.	Northern region (Morena, Gwalior, Shivpuri and other districts)	Bundelkhandi
2.	North Eastern region (Satna, Rewa, Sidhi and other districts)	Baghelkhandi
3.	Western Region (Jhabua, Ratlam, Dhar, Indore, Mandsaur and other districts)	Malwi
4.	South Western region (Khargone, Khandwa, Hoshangabad (part), Harda and other districts)	Nimadi
5.	Certain blocks of districts (Chhindwara and other districts bordering Maharashtra)	Khariboli (with a influence of Marathi/ Khandeshi), or Marathi

Source: Fieldwork for this study (2004).

Local languages like Malwi and Nimadi have strong written literary traditions.

Table 1.2 outlines the speech patterns at an aggregate level in the state of Orissa. The other parameters like bilingualism and the use of link or market languages are discussed later.

Table 1.2 : Language Pattern in Orissa

Region	Nature of Oriya spoken	Tribal languages spoken	Link languages	Minority non-tribal Language
Coastal	Standard	—	—	Telugu, Urdu, Bengali
Northern	Standard	Santali, Mundari, Kishan	Sadri	Bihari Hindi
Western	Koshali or Sambhalpuri dialect	Gondi, Kondh, Kishan, Bhunjia, Munda, Saora, Kondh	Laria	Laria
Southern	Standard	Gondi, Parja, Kutia, Koya, Didayi, Bonda	Desia	Telugu

Source: Fieldwork for this study (2004).

While most states have a multiplicity of spoken languages, the linguistic diversity is more pronounced in certain parts of the country. The North-eastern part of India and the tribal areas in the rest of the country are linguistically very diverse.

Language and Dialect

In this report, the following understanding of 'language' and 'dialect' has been used:

If two different ways of using language are mutually intelligible, i.e. if one set of speakers can use their language and be understood by a second set of speakers (without a translator), then these two can be considered as varieties of a language, or dialects. Thus, a dialect is a variety of a language that also exists in other varieties. All but the smallest languages exist in a number of regional and social dialects. A language, on the other hand, is not a variety of anything larger than itself. Speakers of two different languages, who do not know each other's languages, would have little mutual intelligibility. However, distinctions based on the 'mutual intelligibility' criterion are often difficult to make, because there is a spectrum of differences in the use of language and the extent of intelligibility. In many languages, one of the dialects is treated as the standard dialect.

In more popular usage, the term 'language' is used only for the standard variety, while the term dialect is used for non-standard varieties.

For example, in the North-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya, less than one-third of the population speaks one of the scheduled languages. Other states, where the number of speakers of non-scheduled languages is much higher than the national average (of 3.7 per cent) are Assam, Manipur, Orissa, Sikkim and Tripura. This is due, almost entirely, to the presence of a large number of linguistically diverse tribal groups.

Even at the *district level, there is a significant plurality in spoken languages.* For example, in the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawrangpur and Raygada in southern Orissa, there are 53 scheduled tribes, out of which 13 use their own tribal

languages. In the North Cachar Hills district of Assam, 65 per cent of the households speak non-scheduled languages and 12 tribal languages and 4 scheduled languages are spoken by at least 10,000 persons. In addition, several 'tea-tribe' languages are spoken by a smaller number of persons. In the districts where fieldwork was undertaken for this report the following language situation emerged (Table 1.3).

During the fieldwork in these five districts, it became clear that *most blocks are also linguistically plural*. This is also substantiated by some socio-linguistic mappings/surveys.[3] For example, in the Balijana block in Goalpara district of Assam, about 30 per cent of the population speaks the local dialect of Assamese. The Assamese speakers include the general Assamese community and a small proportion of Rabhas and Bodos who have adopted the local Assamese language. About 25 per cent of the population belonging to the Rabha community

Table 1.3: Languages spoken in the five districts

S. No.	Name of district	Names of main languages spoken	Link language (in part of the district)
1.	Gajapati (Orissa)	Oriya, Saora, Kandh, Telugu	Local Oriya
2.	Chindwara (Madhya Pradesh)	Hindi, Gondi, Marathi, Mawasi	Hindi, Marathi
3.	Raigarh (Chhattisgarh)	Chhattisgarhi, Oraon, Kharia, Mundari, Gondi	Sadari and Chhattisgarhi (mainly)
4.	Dahod (Gujarat)	Bhili, Gujarati, Pardeshik languages of Meghwals and Bakshis, Rajasthani, Hindi	Gujarati, mixture of pardeshik bhashas
5.	Goalpara (Assam)	Assamese (local version), Garo, Bodo, Rabha, Bengali (local version used mostly by the religious minority community)	Assamese (local version)

Source: Fieldwork for this study (2004).

speak Rongdaniya or Maytoriya as their home language. Another 20 per cent belong to the Garo tribal community and speak the Garo language at home. The remaining 25 per cent are Muslims who speak a language that has some affinity with Bengali. Even *within a panchayat or a village*, the study team noted the presence of different mother tongue (language or dialect) groups.

At a very macro-level, it can be said the language situation of every state in India would include:

i. Areas where variants of the regional/state language, that could be considered as dialects or languages having some similarity with the standard language (e.g. Nimadi, Malwi etc. in Madhya Pradesh), are spoken

ii. Pockets of tribal population where the tribal language is spoken at home

iii. Towns/economically better off areas with migrant population which speaks a different language (e.g. persons of Bihar origin settled in Assam

iv. Inter-state border areas where some of the population speaks a language which is the official language of the adjoining state (e.g. Telugu speaking population in districts of Koraput, Malkangiri etc. in Orissa) and

v. Areas where a multilingual situation exists.

This pattern would not be applicable to states of the North-east (other than Assam) and certain parts of Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh that are dominated by tribal groups. The tribal languages belong to the Austro-Asiatic or the Tibeto-Burman language groups, and are therefore genealogically very different compared to the non-tribal languages that belong to the Indo-European or Dravidian language groups.

The above discussion is a very simplistic presentation of the field situation of linguistic diversity. It has several limitations. The counting of speakers of a particular language (or its constituent mother tongues) does not give any indication of the (i) actual language usage in different domains, for example, within the home with adults and children, at the market, in

offices etc. It also does not indicate the attitudes and preferences that people have for various languages and the language in which they want their children to be educated; and (ii) actual proficiency of people in a particular language. Most importantly, it does not provide information about the languages spoken and understood by children of 5-6 years of age (at the time of entry into primary school).

In this report, the focus is on the young child of 5-6 years age at the time of first joining primary school. The first language (also called L1) of a young child is the language spoken and understood well by the child at this age. If the language used at school is different from the child's first language, it would be referred to as a second language (also L2).

1.2 SOME DIMENSIONS OF THE COMPLEX LINGUISTIC SITUATIONS:

This is a very limited discussion and is intended to only provide a flavour of the complex nature of the variations in the spoken language.

Variations of dialect

The spoken language changes from one place to another and is influenced by several factors. All languages have several variants. These variants form a continuum of speech patterns in a seamless manner. For example, in Assam, the Assamese spoken in eastern Assam (around Sivasagar district) is considered to be the standard version. As one moves westwards, beyond the district of Morigaon (which is located in the central portion of the Brahmaputra valley), the gap between the standard dialect and the local version of Assamese increases. The mutual intelligibility of the versions spoken (also written) in the western-most districts of Dhubri and Kokrajhar and the standard eastern Assam dialect is almost nil.

In Orissa, the dominant form of Oriya spoken in the coastal region is the standard Oriya dialect and the official/ educational language. There are variants of Oriya in the form of Koshali (Western Orissa), Dakshini (Southern Orissa) and

Baleswari (Northern Orissa). About 11.1 million people speak the Koshali dialect. In West Bengal, one form of Bengali language, viz. Parhi is spoken in most parts of the state with its own dialect variations. Another version called Bagri is spoken in the region bordering Bangladesh.

These variations, i.e. dialects exist even among the non-scheduled tribal languages. Bhili/Bhilodi, a major language spoken by Bhil tribal groups in western Madhya Pradesh, North-western Maharashtra, South-eastern Rajasthan, Southern Gujarat and Dadra and Nagar Haveli has several dialects. Gondi speaking population is located in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. There were more than 2.1 million speakers of Gondi (in 1991) with more than half a dozen mother tongues/dialects included in this group.

Many of these tribal languages are spoken quite differently in different states, as they are influenced by the local regional language. A very good example of this is the Sadri language. Sadri is spoken by tea plantation workers in Assam. Their Sadri (which has a strong influence of Assamese) is very different from the Sadri spoken by tribal groups in Jharkhand or the Sadri used as a contact language in Sundargarh district of Orissa. In many of these languages that are not being used as official languages in the state or in education, there is often a problem in identifying a standard dialect/version that is acceptable to the entire social group.

Variations in the language ordinarily used at home; language used with children; multilingualism; and the use of link or contact languages.

In one block of Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh, Gond tribal households use different languages depending on their location (distance from the inter-state border to Maharashtra, proximity to the main road/town or a market), the nature of the village where they live (an exclusively tribal village or a mixed village with a significant non-tribal population), the literacy level of the adults in the family and their upward

mobility aspirations. Thus, it is seen that parents and adults speak with children at home in Hindi in mixed population villages or areas close to the block headquarters, or with higher literacy levels. In such areas, the parents clearly articulated that they would not want their children to feel backward and isolated and would like them to learn the local regional language from their childhood. In remote areas where the population is largely tribal and the interaction with other social groups is infrequent, more Gondi is spoken at home, even with children.

The situation in the Kharsian block in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh is even more complex. In this multi-ethnic and multilingual block, tribal groups speak Nagesia, Oraon, Gondi, Kond, Kharia languages. But some of the tribal groups have adopted Sadani as their home language in the eastern part of the block. Chhattisgarhi is used as the link language among different tribal groups. However, in many areas of the block parents and children communicate with each other in Sadani/ Chhattisgahi even at home. The tribal mother tongue is still used with elders in the family in most households. In some areas children have to learn four or five languages by the time they complete primary school. For example, a child in a Mundari speaking household in Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh would speak Mundari with his parents, Chhattisgarhi with his friends and neighbours and learn Hindi at school as the language used for instruction and try and pick up English from grade 3 onwards.

In India, bilingualism (and even trilingualism) is fairly common among adults. The 1991 Census reported a national average rate of bilingualism to be 19.44 per cent.[4] The extent of bilingualism is much higher among speakers of non-scheduled tribal languages. More than 38 per cent (in 1991) of the speakers of non-scheduled languages reported that they knew two or more languages. However, this bilingualism cannot be taken as 'native like' control or use of two languages for all people who reported that they are bilingual. It is also high for speakers of languages like Dogri, Konkani, and Kodagu since

they have high literacy levels and their languages are not used in schools as mediums of instruction. Even though a low rate of bilingualism is reported by speakers of mother tongues in the Hindi-Urdu-Punjabi region in North-central India, they are actually bilingual in their mother tongue and the standard Hindi/Urdu language.

For most tribal groups, bilingualism is more in the nature of grassroots or 'folk bilingualism', which means that the knowledge and use of the dominant-local language is confined to a limited repertoire adequate only for meaningful communication with other social groups and in the market place. For example, Rabha adults in Goalpara district of Assam comfortably use the local variant of Assamese (Goalpariya) with other groups; and Gonds in Chhindwara district use local Marathi or Hindi in the market place. Such bilingualism is common among adults who are in contact with persons of other communities. However, their knowledge of the language of wider communication is quite limited.

The fieldwork for this report and interaction with a large number of resource persons within and outside government has shown that the extent of bilingualism among children of 5-6 years age, prior to their enrolment in primary schools, is very limited. Children at that age in rural, educationally/ economically disadvantaged situations are largely monolingual, speaking either their ancestral language or the local dominant language. Findings of linguistic surveys indicating a high level of bilingualism do not portray a correct picture of the language proficiencies of 5-6 year old children, which is the major input for deciding 'language of instruction' strategies in the early grades of primary school. Elder children, in situations where bilingualism is common, pick up the additional language at school (medium of instruction), through exposure to radio and TV, and greater interaction with the outside world (market place etc.). Even their understanding and skills in the regional language may remain limited to basic conversational skills, rather than real, native-like control of the second language.

In many parts of the country, where there are several socio-ethno-linguistic groups residing in proximity, a *lingua-franca* or a contact language often evolves for inter-group communication and also in the market place. Such contact languages are used in inter-tribal group communication, as well as between tribal and non-tribals. Desia is a link language used extensively in the tribal dominated districts of southern Orissa. It has a strong affinity with Oriya language. In Sundargarh district of Orissa, adjoining Jharkhand, Sadri is the contact language. Sadri is not close to Oriya and is strongly influenced by Laria (Chhattisgarhi) and Munda language. The Laria language is used as the lingua franca in some parts of Nuapada and Bargar districts of Orissa. In Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh, many of the tribal groups used Sadri as the lingua franca and also use it at home with the children. The local regional language Chhattisgarhi is commonly used outside the home and is also now commonly used by parents with children and by children in communication with other children. Chhattisgarhi has almost become like a second mother tongue for a majority of the tribal households. Thus, several link languages are becoming home languages for tribal households in many parts of the country. Link languages like Sadri, Desia and Chhattisgarhi have a rich literary tradition.

1.3 IMPLICATIONS OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY FOR LANGUAGES USED FOR INSTRUCTION

i. *Large number of children studying in an unfamiliar language:* Against 114 languages and 216 mother tongues, less than 20 languages are used as mediums of instruction at the primary level. Only 3 or 4 tribal languages are used as mediums of instruction, and that too only in North-east India. Thus, almost all tribal children are studying through the medium of an unfamiliar language. For example, almost 700,000 Bhili/Bhilodi speaking children are studying in Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi mediums in different parts of western India. Even among non-tribal groups, the incidence of use of a second language as medium of instruction is high. For example, Dogri, which is widely spoken in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, is not a medium of instruction.[5]

Similarly, Kashmiri is also not used as a medium of instruction. Most children who actually speak Urdu at home in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat study in state-language medium primary schools. Also, children of migrants and residents of inter-state border areas often do not get access to schools with their first language as the medium of instruction. Even if there are some primary schools offering their first language as a medium of instruction, the absence of adequate number of middle and secondary schools dissuades parents in these areas from sending their children to the mother tongue medium primary schools.

In addition, a significant proportion of children whose first language is considered as a dialect of the regional language, actually do not understand the standard dialect used as the medium of instruction at the time of entry into school. Linguistically speaking, these first languages should be considered as languages distinct from the medium of instruction.

A conservative estimate of the proportion of all school-going children in grade 1 who are being taught in a language they cannot understand properly would be at least 20 to 25 per cent.

ii. *Need to understand the complex reality of linguistic diversity:* First of all, educational policy makers, planners and academic personnel need to recognise that there is great linguistic diversity even within small geographical units. Also, this diversity needs to be understood in all its dimensions to plan for appropriate strategies at the primary level. It must be remembered that the most important aspect is the understanding of the language proficiency of 5-6 year old children at the time of entry into school. At present there is very little understanding of this issue at any level of educational administration, including the academic institutions like SCERTs, DIETs etc.

The Census results could be a good basis to begin understanding the linguistic diversity. The Census provides an aggregate picture at the district level that could be used to get an overall picture of the diversity and to prioritise

action in the area of primary education. However, much more in-depth information on language usage, proficiency and preferences would be required to decide on educational interventions. Such information could be collected through socio-linguistic surveys and mapping.

iii. The issue of *attitudes and preferences of the community* towards its own and other languages for their use in primary education is crucial to the process of taking a decision on appropriate strategies relating to the medium of instruction. Several surveys have indicated that many socio-linguistic groups attach prestige to the dominant regional language and would want their children to get schooling in that language (which may be completely unfamiliar to young children).

iv. A related issue is that of the *role that could be assigned to link or contact languages* that may be widely spoken or understood in tribal areas. While these hybridized languages like Desia, Sadri, Kurmali, Nagamese serve as the lingua franca for a large number of mother tongue groups, they are not considered prestigious by the community, nor are they considered appropriate for use as medium of instruction for education.

v. There is an *increasing demand for the teaching of English* as a subject and even for shifting to English medium in several parts of the country. This has resulted in most state governments deciding to introduce English as a subject from the early grades of primary school.[6] The demand for introduction of English as a medium of instruction is strong in tribal areas in several parts of the country, especially those that have a strong presence of Christian missionaries. Some districts of Mizoram, autonomous hill districts of Assam, Kashmir valley and Ladakh have shifted to English medium in all government schools. This is a disturbing trend that needs to be addressed urgently.

vi. *The case of Urdu:* The 1991 Census recorded about 43.36 million Urdu speakers in the country.[7] In terms of numerical strength, Urdu occupies the sixth position in the country, but its speakers are dispersed across the country. It is not the dominant language in any state. In Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and parts of Tamil Nadu, a significant proportion of the Muslim

population speaks Urdu or actually a local variant of Urdu that has some influence of the regional language. In states like West Bengal, Assam and Kerala, Muslims generally speak the local regional language and not Urdu. Of course, in Assam, the Muslims who have shifted from the erstwhile East Bengal, speak dialects very different from the local language in several districts. Muslims who have migrated to West Bengal, especially from Bihar, usually speak the dialect of their native district. In West Bengal, the team undertaking the fieldwork discovered that in one block of Uttar Dinajpur district, the Muslim population has been vociferously demanding the introduction of Urdu-medium at the primary level.

In most parts of North India, Muslims actually speak the local language, e.g. Bhojpuri or Maithili, but register Urdu as their mother tongue at the time of the Census. The *sanskritisation* of the standard Hindi used in education and administration in north Indian states has distanced the standard language greatly from the Hindi-Urdu (or Hindustani) spoken by the masses. This, along with the perception of imposition of Hindu religious symbols or content in school curriculum has fuelled the demand for using Urdu as the medium of instruction in areas where the local Muslim population actually speaks the local dialect/language used by all other social groups in the area at home and outside. Also, for Muslims, learning Urdu has a strong symbolic value and a means of preserving their cultural identity.

1.4 LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Every state has an official language. Some states have declared an additional language(s) to be the official language for a specific region of a state. There is no clear definition of a linguistic minority. One definition suggests that a linguistic minority" at the state level is any group of people whose mother tongue is different from the principal language of the state, and at the district and block level, different from the principal language of the district or block."[8] This would imply that a minority language has a numerically smaller number of speakers in any geographical unit. However, this interpretation may not

always apply. For example, Urdu is the mother tongue of a numerically much smaller population in Kashmir, but is given the status of the official language. The same is the case of English in the North-east. Stretching this argument further, it is common knowledge that the standard form of language recognized as the official language has much fewer speakers than those of the various dialects and variants. For these reasons, the term minority language is used sparingly in this book in the Indian context. Where used, the implication is simply that the language is not a recognized official language of the state or a region within a state. Implications of 'power' and 'dominance' that would obviously be associated with the concept of majority and minority languages have not been referred to in this book.

1.5 MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Of the 50 languages (not including the mother tongues grouped under these languages), with more than 100,000 speakers, reported in 1991, only 17 are used as medium of instruction at the primary stage.[9] With the exception of a few languages like Bodo, Garo and Khasi in North-eastern India, none of the ancestral languages spoken by scheduled tribes are used anywhere in the country as a medium of instruction at the primary level.

In 20 states, for which the Education Department's DISE (District Information System for Education) data is available for 2003-04, there are 1,03,609 primary schools with more than 50 per cent children belonging to scheduled tribes. 76,458 primary schools in these 20 states have more than 75 per cent ST children. 58,343 primary schools have more than 90 per cent ST children.[10]

An interesting feature of the enrolment of ST children, that substantiates the common understanding that the population of scheduled tribes is concentrated in identified pockets, is that 84 percent of the total ST children enrolled in primary schools in these states, are enrolled in schools that have 50 percent or

more ST children. This implies that it is easy to identify primary schools, where most of the children belong to the scheduled tribes and are, therefore, studying through an unfamiliar second language.

Every state, thus, has a detailed and regularly updated database (DISE) on the medium of instruction and the enrolment of ST children in each school. The first language backgrounds of children are not available in this database. A sub-district level breakdown of number of speakers of different languages is available in the Census reports. These two databases (DISE and Census) could provide a starting point for identifying areas where there is a large concentration of children with a serious language disadvantage. For a more detailed understanding of the language issues in a particular area, detailed socio-linguistic mapping would need to be undertaken (*this would be discussed in Chapter 7*).

The number of languages used as mediums of instruction at the primary level in different states varies from 3 to 10. Some other languages are used in every state as additional second and third language subjects at the primary and middle school stages. This study focuses only on the languages used as mediums of instruction at the primary stage and not the teaching of children's first languages, or other languages as subjects in the later grades of primary school.

NOTES

1. A district is the administrative unit below the state level. A block is an administrative unit with about 100-150 villages. A panchayat is a unit of local self-government covering a few villages and a population of about 10,000.

2. Actually, the number of mother tongues returned in 1961 and 1971 Censuses was around 3000. In 1981, this figure rose to around 7000, and in 1991 it was around 10,000. These raw returns are 'rationalised' by classifying them based on identified groups and categories. These rationalized mother tongues are further classified and grouped under appropriate languages. The system of classification and grouping of

mother tongues under various languages has changed from one Census to another. For a more detailed discussion on Census classification of languages and mother tongues, see Lachman M. Khubchandani, 'Language Demography and Language in Education,' in *Language Education in Multilingual India*, ed. C.J. Daswani (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2001), 3-28.

3. Only three surveys could be identified:

i. Academy of Tribal Dialect and Culture, Orissa, 'Linguistic survey and mapping in four DPEP districts of Orissa' ATDC, Bhubaneshwar, a report, 1999;

ii. Prof. D. Maral, 'Linguistic survey of Dhubri district,' DPEP Assam, working paper, 1996; and

iii. Troy Bailey, Karsten Riezen, and Irene van Riezen, 'A Sociolinguistic and Educational Survey of Kumaun, Summer Institute of Linguistics, India, 1999.

4. This rate is significantly higher compared to the national average recorded in earlier Censuses (1981-13.34%)

5. In the Kashmir valley, the medium of instruction in most government schools was Urdu until the 2003-04 academic session. From 2004, the state government has suddenly decided to make English as the medium of instruction from grade 1. The autonomous District Councils of Leh and Kargil had already shifted to English medium earlier.

6. English is introduced as a subject in different grades in various states:

Grade	State
Grade 1	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Harayana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Rajasthan, Arunachal, Manipur, Mizoram, West Bengal, Tripura, Sikkim, Meghalaya
Grade 2	Tamil Nadu, Orissa
Grade 3	Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar
Grade 5	Gujarat, Karnataka

7. The states of Uttar Pradesh (12.5 million), Bihar (8.52 million), Maharashtra (5.73 million), Andhra Pradesh (5.56 million), Karnataka (4.48 million), West Bengal (1.45 million), Madhya Pradesh (1.23 million), Tamil Nadu

(1.04 million), Rajasthan (0.95 million), Gujarat (0.55 million) and Delhi (0.51 million) reported a significant number of Urdu speakers in the 1991 census.

8. This is taken from a report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities (1997)

9. For a description of languages used as medium of instruction in various parts of the country, see Omkar N. Kaul and L. Devaki, 'Medium of instruction across levels of education in India,' in *Language Education in Multi-lingual India*, ed. C.J. Daswani (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2001) 104-116.

10. This analysis is based on the District Information System for Education (DISE) 2003-04. DISE is an information system for primary and middle schools implemented under the District Primary Education Programme, and now the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

LANGUAGE SITUATIONS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

It is important to attempt to understand how this bewildering language diversity of first languages of young children manifests itself in the early grades of the primary school and the challenges it poses for education the early grades.[1]

2.1 CATEGORISING SCHOOL LANGUAGE SITUATIONS

The language situation of a school/classroom can be described using the following variables that operate in a classroom teaching-learning process:

i. *The first language (L1) of the children* in a particular class, especially children in grade I. It has been discussed earlier that the first language of a child may not be the mother tongue associated with his/her social group/community.

ii. *Medium of Instruction (MoI)*: The Language used in the school to teach different subjects. The curriculum (including the textbooks) envisage classroom transaction in the standard language (dialect). However, the actual language used by the teacher in the classroom for instruction may not always be the standard language prescribed in the curriculum.

iii. *Regional language (RL) or the official language*(s) of the state in which the school is located. The term 'local language' would be used to mean the predominant language in the area where the school is situated. It would be the language of inter- group communication or lingua franca in areas where

there is linguistic diversity. Often it is the local version/dialect of the state's regional language.

iv. *Language background of the teacher* and the language used by him/her for instruction and communication with children.

The teacher's proficiency in the language used as the medium of instruction and the first language of the children are crucial dimensions for the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. The worst situation is when the teacher is unable to communicate with the children in grades 1 and 2, since she does not understand their language. This is a common situation in several tribal areas where one or more teachers in a school are from a non-tribal background. In multilingual classrooms, the teacher may not know the language of one group of children (common in villages with mixed tribal and non-tribal population). With the emphasis on recruitment of local teachers in most states, teachers in a majority of the schools are at least conversant with the local language (or the contact language) even if they cannot speak the language understood and spoken by children in grade 1.

Another crucial aspect of the language situation in a classroom is the *language used by the teacher for instruction*.[2] The study team found the following types of language used by teachers:

a. A strict L2 (MoI - standard language) environment, where children are also not allowed to speak in their first language.
b. While instruction is mainly in L2, children's L1 is used to explain certain concepts and difficult words or while giving complicated instructions.
c. The teacher freely and extensively uses the children's L1 in transacting the content.

The attitude of the teacher towards the children of different socio-linguistic groups would also determine her approach in addressing their language disadvantage in classroom instruction. Often, the attitudinal bias or prejudice of the teacher towards

tribal children results in low expectations from the children. Also, the teacher does not make any special effort to help these children. This ensures that their disadvantage becomes more severe. To be able to arrive at a limited number of broad categories of school situations from the language point of view, only the dimensions of teachers' proficiency (understand and speak) in the children's first language would be considered as a variable (and not their attitudes).[3]

Based on these four variables, viz. children's first language, the medium of instruction, the regional and local language and the teachers' understanding of the children's first language, the following broad categories of school situations can be worked out (Table 2.1).

2.2 LEARNING DISADVANTAGE

Children in school situation types IIIB and IVB face the most serious disadvantage in learning. In tribal areas, children in classrooms of type IIIB may suffer further on account of the negative attitudes that non-tribal teachers have towards tribal children. Type IIIA and IVA are also very adverse situations for children. Mixed language background or multi-lingual classrooms (Type V) also offer a serious challenge to the children, as well as to the teacher to organize effective learning (Table 2.2).

This is a simplistic categorization and could serve as the starting point of further in-depth analysis. As we shall see in later chapters, the extent of learning problems faced by children in any situation also depends to a considerable extent on the socio-economic condition of the area and the households, especially the literacy level of parents, the extent of contact with speakers of the regional language, the exposure to the regional (standard version) language through radio and TV, the motivation to learn the second language, the attitude of the teachers and the effectiveness of the school.

Table 2.1: School situation types

Situation type	First language of children (L1)	Medium of Instruction (MoI) (standard language)	Classroom composition (L1 of children)	Teachers' proficiency in children's L1[4]
Type IA	L1 is very similar to MoI (standard language)	MoI is the RL	Monolingual	Teachers know L1
Type IB		MoI is not the RL	Monolingual	Teachers know L1
Type II	L1 is similar to the standard language used for instruction. It is often considered a variant of MoI	MoI is the RL	Monolingual	Teachers know L1[5]
Type IIIA	L1 is very different from the or another L1	MoI is the RL or another language	Monolingual	Teachers know L1
Type IIIB	MoI. L1 is not used as MoI anywhere in the country. In many cases L1 could be an unwritten language. L1 could be a language spoken by tribal or	MoI is the RL	Monolingual	Teachers do not know L1

non-tribal social groups.

Type	Description		Monolingual/Multilingual	Teacher knowledge
Type IVA	L1 is very different from the RL and the MoI used in the school.	MoI is the RL	Monolingual	Teachers know L1
Type IVB	However, this L1 is used as MoI in other schools in the same state or in other states	MoI is the RL	Monolingual	Teachers do not know L1
Type V	Children of different first language backgrounds are in the same class. Some could be speaking a language similar to the MoI, while others may belong to other language groups including tribal languages. There could be two or more language groups in the class.	MoI is the RL or another language.	Multilingual	Teachers usually know the language of one group of children. In some tribal areas, they may not know any of the children's languages, but are likely to be conversant with the lingua franca/contact language.

Table 2.2: Examples of school situation types

Type of school/ classroom	Illustrative school situations
Type I	A school in a village near Pune, or in a district in eastern Assam, with a homogenous population, where the spoken language is very similar to the standard language used at school.
Type II*	A school in a non-tribal area of Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh where the spoken language is Nimadi, the medium of instruction is Hindi, and the teachers speak and understand the local language. Also, a school in Sambhalpur district of Western Orissa, where the Western Orissa dialect of Oriya (Koshali/Sambhalpuri) is spoken. The teacher also belongs to the same area.
Type IIIA and IIIB	A school in the Kashmir Valley where the spoken language is Kashmiri and the medium of instruction is Urdu/English. The teacher being local, knows Kashmiri (IIIA). In fact, she may not be proficient in English at all. Also a school in the state of Mizoram. A school in a Savara or Kui speaking tribal village in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh with a teacher of the same community, with Telugu as the medium of instruction (IIIA'). A school in Mohana block of Gajapati district in Orissa with all Kondh speaking children and a teacher who can only speak Oriya (IIIB); or a school in a village in Kokrajhar district of Assam with 100 per cent children from the Santal community

Type of school/ classroom	Illustrative school situations
	and Santali as their first language, studying in Assamese medium, being taught by teachers who cannot speak/understand any Santali at all.
Type IV	A school in Parbhani town of Maharashtra with all children belonging to the religious minority community with Urdu as their first language and studying in Marathi medium (IVA). A school in Joypur block of Koraput district where all children come from Telugu speaking families and study in Oriya medium. The school has Oriya teachers, one of whom also knows Telugu.
Type V	An ashram school in BR Hills block of Mysore district with Kannada and Soliga speaking children in each class. The medium of instruction is Kannada and the teachers are Kannada speaking. A school in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh where many classes have a mixed language situation with Hindi (local dialect) and Korku speaking children. Such bilingual/ multilingual classrooms are common in most parts of the country, especially in areas where there are mixed villages with tribal and non-tribal community households residing together.

* Many so-called dialects are actually quite different from the standard language (they are actually different languages). Schools in such areas would belong to category III.

This typology of school language situations, though somewhat simplistic, would be used to discuss the learning disadvantages faced by children as well as to identify appropriate educational strategies in different home and school language situations.

NOTES

1. We would like to steer clear of the debate on the 'multilingualism as a problem' viewpoint versus the 'multilingualism as a resource' approach. In the schools visited by the study team and the team's experience of the past decade of work in primary schools, the learning disadvantage faced by children who are studying through a second, unfamiliar language seemed to be the biggest concern. In the current situation, the presence of children from different language backgrounds, especially those that are very distant from the language used for instruction, poses a big problem that needs to be addressed urgently.

2. Language teaching strategies across the country are so inappropriate that even children whose home language is very similar to the school language are unable to develop good comprehension skills and academic/creative use of language. It would be incorrect to say that such children do not face any problem in learning.

3. The language used by the children in classroom interaction with the teacher should also be considered while defining the language situation in a classroom. However, in a vast majority of the classrooms in India, children rarely speak (except for repeating after the teacher, or another student, or when reading aloud), so this aspect has been neglected.

4. Schools often have teachers with different language backgrounds. Thus, while one or two teachers may be able to speak and understand the children's language, others may not even understand the children's first language. For arriving at a situation type (listed above), the language proficiency of teachers who are mainly allocated to grades 1 and 2 could be considered.

5. For situation type II also, there may be schools where the teachers do not know the children's L1. In the fieldwork it was seen, that in most such schools, the teachers either knew or were able to pick up the L1, which has some similarity with the standard language.

LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT IN CLASSROOMS; LEARNING PROBLEMS FACED BY CHILDREN AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

To get a more focused understanding of the disadvantage faced by children who study through a second, unfamiliar language and the impact on their learning, the study team undertook fieldwork (during 2004) in eight schools in four states. These schools where detailed classroom observation and student assessment activities were conducted, represented different types of school situations identified in the previous chapter. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the language situations in these eight schools.

The classroom observation and students' assessment was undertaken for grades 1 and 5. The focus was more on grade I since the children face the biggest crisis of being spoken to and taught in an unfamiliar language for the first time. Presented below is a summary analysis of the findings of the team on the following aspects:

i.   Methodology of teaching of language.
ii. Language used in the classrooms by the teachers and the children.
iii. An overall sense of the level of children's understanding of what was being transacted in the observed classrooms.

Table 3.1: Language situation in the eight schools

S. No.	Name of school	Name of the district	Name of the block	Children's language at class 1	Medium of instruction	Language used by the teacher at class 1	Situation type
1.	Bamunghop a LP school	Goalpara (Assam)	Balijana	Rongdaniya (dialect of Rabha)	Assamese	Standard and local version of Assamese	Type II
2.	Salgodha LP school	Goalpara (Assam)	Balijana	Rabha	Assamese	Rabha and local version of Assamese	Type II
3.	Hesh Faliya Uchavan School	Dahod (Gujarat)	Devgad Baria	Pardeshik Bhasha of Meghwals and Bakshi's	Gujarati	Mix of Pardeshik Bhasha and Gujarati	Type III A
4.	Zhabu Main Primary school	Dahod (Gujarat)	Dhanpur	Bhili	Gujarati	Mix of Bhili and Gujarati	Type III B
5.	Chandrikapur Primary school	Chindwara (Madhya Pradesh)	Bichhua	Marathi, Gondi, Hindi	Hindi	Standard Hindi	Type V
6.	Madkasur primary school	Chhindwara (Madhya Pradesh)	Bichhua	Mawasi	Hindi	Marathi influenced Hindi	Type IIIB
7.	Ambhajari primary school	Gajapati (Orissa)	Guma	Saora (75%) Oriya (25%)	Oriya	Saora and Oriya	Type V
8.	Munising primary school	Gajapati (Orissa)	Guma	Saora	Oriya	Oriya	Type IIIB

iv. A consolidated analysis of the performance of students, based mainly on the assessment activities conducted with grade I and grade V children in each of the eight selected schools. The analysis also incorporates the performance of children in the periodic tests and the impression formed during classroom observation and interaction with children.

The students' assessment activities and the interaction with children were conducted mainly to supplement the classroom observation and to give the team a first hand understanding of the learning problems faced by children learning through a second language and a broad indication of their learning levels mid-way through grade 1 and grade 5 (grade 4 in Assam) in the basic language skills of oral response, reading (fluency and comprehension) and writing.[1] The thrust was also on trying to understand students' proficiency and motivation to use their first language. These findings therefore cannot be used for any generalization about the learning achievement levels of students of a particular social or linguistic background. (*See Appendix II for details of the assessment activities carried out*)

3.1 ANALYSIS FOR GRADE 1

General observations

Beginning with the first month, the emphasis, in all the schools that were observed (except one), is almost entirely on copying of alphabets and numbers from the black board or the textbook and very little oral work is done. Thus, language learning is initiated through memorization of the alphabet chart and writing of alphabets. Later, the children are put through some alphabet recognition exercises followed by joining of alphabets to form simple words. Thus, the children get no scope to use the unfamiliar second language for conversation and other interesting oral activities which could help in early acquisition of the second language. The children are mostly passive and only answer in monosyllables when the teacher asks a question. In almost all the schools, we observed that the teachers spend very little time in grade 1 (between one to two

hours a day) and the children were sitting idle for the remaining part of the day. This is mainly owing to the fact that most schools in tribal areas or areas inhabited by a linguistic or ethnic minority have inadequate teachers and each teacher looks after two or three grades. Also, in Madhya Pradesh, owing to the importance given to the external examination at the end of grade V, the teachers end up spending most of their time in grade 5, neglecting the earlier grades. Thus, the most crucial initial stage where the children have to grapple with understanding a new language and trying to learn to read in it, and when the attention of the teacher is most required, the children are left to carry out the most inappropriate tasks of copying and recitation. These tasks are almost designed to ensure that they are not able to pick up the second language properly in the initial year. This deficit in terms of inadequate understanding of the school language accumulates further in the following years, increasing the burden of non-comprehension in the later primary and upper primary grades.

An attempt has been made to compare the general learning environment, language use patterns and children's performance in grade 1 in the different school types that were identified in Chapter 2. However, this analysis is confined to the individual schools actually studied and cannot be generalized.

Schools where the students' first language is very different from the language of instruction (as used by the teachers) (Type III)

Children in grade I (after about six months of the academic session) are not able to comprehend the language spoken by the teacher since the standard language is used for instruction. Some teachers who know the children's first language also do not use it for classroom transaction because they feel that this would be against the official policy of use of the standard language for instruction, *and / or* they believe that the exclusive use of the standard language would help to provide maximum exposure to the standard language which would help the children pick up the language quickly. These teachers speak

in long monologues since there is no possibility of response from the children who do not understand what the teacher is saying.

Children cannot recognize alphabets, except when arranged in a sequence. They cannot speak even a few words in the standard language. A majority of the children named objects shown to them in their first language quite easily. However, they could not articulate simple answers even in their first language and mostly used one or two words to reply to questions. They were, however, clearly more comfortable when spoken to in their first language.

Schools where the students' first language is very different from the standard language, but the teachers use the first language for classroom transaction (Type III A)

In some schools where the teachers are from the local community, they tend to use the children's language to communicate with children, give instructions and also explain the content of the textbook. In such classrooms, there is much greater communication between the teacher and the children. The children understand the teachers' instructions and are not completely silent (unlike the situation in classrooms where the children's first language is not used at all).[2] This situation is, however, not very common in tribal areas because there are fewer tribal teachers and many of them hesitate to use the tribal language extensively in the classroom. The use of the local tongue is much more common in situations where the local language is a variant of the standard language. Since in such areas, teachers are mostly from the locality of the school and are often not so well versed in the standard language, they tend to use the local language extensively in the classroom. In some schools in Assam, it was seen that the class was being conducted mainly in the local dialect and the standard language was used only when reading from the textbook. The teaching method in all these schools is similar, with the emphasis being on copying and recitation with little oral - communicative work. The focus is on recognizing and writing alphabets and numbers.

The first language of the children is used in the initial grades mainly to help communicate with children and explain difficult words. In grade 1, this results in reducing the shock of learning through a new language and also makes the teachers' input more comprehensible. There is no effort, however, at development of first language skills of the children.

Very often, in tribal areas, teachers only know the link or the contact language, (and not the children's home language) which they use in the classroom. But the children in grade 1 have very little understanding of the link language and there is poor communication between the teacher and the children and little comprehension. Some teachers make an attempt to learn a few words of the local (often tribal) language to be able to understand what the children are saying and use a few local words to be able to partly convey their instructions. Such teachers tend to be more sensitive to the problems faced by the children.

Schools where the MOI is very different from the children's language though their language is used as MOI elsewhere in the state or in the country. (Type IV)

This is a fairly common situation in inter-state border areas and in big urban centres where migrants' children study in schools where the regional language, and not their first language, is the medium of instruction. During the course of the fieldwork, the team came across a large number of such schools in the blocks of Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh which are close to Maharashtra; in some part of Rayagada district in Orissa adjacent to Andhra Pradesh; villages of Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh that share a border with Orissa etc.

In most such schools, the teachers seem to make a fetish of using the language of instruction exclusively in classrooms for all purposes. This is done even though they know that children coming into grade 1 have little understanding of the regional language. Children in such schools fail to learn to speak in the regional language or learn to read or write during

grade 1. The sad part is that their first language (which is a literary and well developed language) skills do not get developed. In urban areas or economically better off areas with a high literacy rate, the home environment provides scope for enrichment of the first language, as well as greater exposure to the second language through radio, television etc. In such areas, the progress of children in learning the second language is better than areas where the home environment does not provide adequate scope for language acquisition.

The second language is taught in exactly in the same manner (to children who have a different first language) as it is taught to children who are native speakers, of that language elsewhere. The school, therefore, does not adopt any strategies to help children transit from their first language to the unfamiliar second language.

Schools where children of different first language backgrounds study together (Type V)

In almost all the mixed language background classrooms that were observed, the teachers use the standard dialect (textbook) or the local variant of the language that is the dominant language in that area.

Even teachers who belong to the tribal community do not use the tribal language while speaking to the tribal children. In a few schools, in one or two districts of Orissa, where extensive teacher orientation on attitudes towards tribal language and culture had taken place, the teachers were seen speaking to the tribal children in their mother tongue.

In some areas, the tribal children also speak the local version of the regional language, though they have only a very limited vocabulary when they first enter school. In such areas, the tribal children do not appear to be at a greater disadvantage than the general (non-ST) children who also face a problem in understanding the standard dialect.

Children whose first language is similar to the language used as the medium of instruction could respond to simple

questions, recognize alphabets and also read and write simple words in grade 1. In the same class, children whose first language is different - mostly tribal language speaking children - performed poorly on reading and oral comprehension tests. This was the finding in every state where such classrooms were studied.

In one village in Madhya Pradesh, almost all children, including the tribal children speak the local version of Marathi as their first language. The medium of instruction in the school is Hindi. We assumed, therefore, that all children faced a similar disadvantage in the learning process. However, the performance of most of the ST children was significantly lower than that of their classmates of other social groups.

One explanation offered for the poorer performance of tribal children is that the Marathi spoken by the tribal families was of a 'pidgin' variety. The bilingualism of the tribal adults is, actually 'folk bilingualism', where the nature of the regional language used by them is of a simple conversational type influenced by their ancestral language. Also, since the parents and other elders speak the tribal language among themselves, the tribal child's exposure to the regional language (Marathi) is quite limited. Thus, these tribal children face a bigger disadvantage compared to the other children (SC and OBC) who have a richer Marathi speaking environment at home which helps them pick up Hindi more easily because there is a lot of similarity between the two languages. However, there are other important factors that could offer part of the explanation for the difference in attainments of tribal and non-tribal children in such schools. The tribal households had a lower socio-economic status and lower levels of parental literacy and a weaker commitment to education of their children.

Here again, it was seen that there was no understanding of how children could be initiated into the second language through appropriate, well-planned strategies for second language acquisition.

In several such schools with mixed language background children, the observations in grade 1 clearly indicate that children who speak a language which is of a different stock (linguistically very different from the language of instruction), and have limited exposure to the regional language when they enter school, definitely face a greater disadvantage than other children who may speak a language which, though quite different from the standard language used as MOI, has some similarity with it.[3] Thus, in schools in Goalpara district of Assam, the Rabha ST children are worse off in the early grades compared to the Rajbongshis who speak Goalpariya, which is often considered a variant of Assamese. In another school, children who speak Gondi at home seem to face more serious comprehension problems than children who come from a Marathi speaking background.

3.2 ANALYSIS FOR GRADE 5

Teaching methodology

Almost all the classrooms that were observed followed a similar teaching methodology. The text is read out aloud either by the teacher or by the students, often followed by chorus-repetition by the students. The teacher then offers some explanations and word meanings, which are usually inadequate to make the children understand the content. Later, the answers to some of the questions at the end of the lesson are written on the blackboard by the teacher for the children to copy. The children do not ask many questions or say anything on their own. Overall, the stress is entirely on rote memorization of the answers. Since the content of the texts in the grade 5 textbooks is really dense, whatever little explanations are given by the teachers only clarify some of the content, while the basic concepts implicit in the lesson are lost. Since class V is the terminal class of primary stage, teachers in most states are intent on getting the children to memorise the answers to the questions in the textbook. Even for science and social studies, the teaching method is similar.

Teachers generally had low expectations of tribal children in almost all the schools that were observed.

Language use in classrooms

In grade 5, the standard language is used for instruction in almost all schools. The basic assumption is that students have, by this stage, acquired some proficiency in the language of instruction. Of course, in each of the eight schools that were observed, teachers in grade 5 were aware of the very limited second language proficiency of the children, and felt that they had no option but to get the students to copy from the textbook or blackboard and memorise the answers.[4]

In two schools (both with effectively one teacher), the teachers who belonged to the local tribal community continued to use the tribal language for instruction (alternately with the textbook language) even in grade 5. Two explanations were provided for this. *One*, the teacher was clearly aware that the students had great difficulty in understanding the text since they had a very limited understanding of the second language. *Two*, the lone teacher had to handle all the primary classes and could not devote time to try and make the children comprehend the text using simple explanations in the standard language.

Performance of children

In general, tribal children (whose first language differed substantially from the MOI) can only read with a lot of effort, mostly word by word, even in grade 5. Their oral skills in the second language are poor and they are definitely more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. Such children cannot frame sentences correctly and have a very limited vocabulary. While they can partially comprehend texts (of grade 2/3 level), they are unable to formulate answers to simple questions in the standard language. In most schools, the tribal language speaking children could not score a single mark in the reading comprehension test.

In schools with a multilingual situation, i.e. where there are some children who are native speakers of the standard language or those who speak a similar dialect and some who speak a tribal language, the spoken language abilities of the tribal children in the second language were somewhat better. But their performance in reading and writing tests was not significantly better. Obviously, peer group interaction helps the tribal children in picking up conversational skills in the regional language. In some of these mixed population villages, there is also a greater exposure of the tribal children to the regional language in its local form.

Generally, children whose first language is a dialect of the main regional language (whose standard form is the medium of instruction) pick up the school language quickly, especially in areas that have high literacy levels.[5] Surprisingly, in one school in Assam (and this is reportedly the situation in the several districts of Assam), due to extensive use of the local dialect, the children did not acquire any proficiency in the standard language even in grade 5 and continued to use words and expressions from the local dialect.[6]

It was saddening to note that the students of grade 5 could not express their thoughts freely and coherently even in their mother tongue. Academic and higher order language skills in the first language do not develop since the language is not used at all in school.

Generally, the ability to comprehend a simple unknown text and answer questions based on an understanding of the text was very unsatisfactory. Almost no child could correctly answer questions that did not have a direct answer in the paragraph. The skill to write in their own words had not been cultivated in the students. The ability to write creatively on an open-ended topic was almost non-existent.

Marathi speaking students studying in Hindi medium fared better in the reading fluency and comprehension tests compared to children who spoke a tribal language at home, though much

lower than the level expected of grade 5 children. While they could read fairly well, oral skills in Hindi were very limited. They made a large number of errors in their writing work that were influenced by Marathi.

Students whose first language was the MOI (or similar to it) performed much better on reading comprehension and writing tests. However, in none of the schools did such grade 5 students have the linguistic, communicative or analytic competence expected at the end of primary stage.[7] They did not posses the vocabulary or understanding of some of the forms of language used in the textbooks of grade 5. The text of 'social studies' was especially difficult for children in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This shows that the malaise runs deeper.

In most socio-economically disadvantaged, low-literacy situations, the home does not provide an environment for continued development of the first language. Since instruction is not provided in the first language at school, children lose competence in that language. The development of competence in the second language also remains stunted. This results in what is called 'semi-lingualism', a condition where the child does not acquire linguistic skills appropriate for his age in any language. This was the most common situation in the schools and blocks that were covered in the fieldwork. It is really unfortunate that our education system is producing semi-lingual children whose language abilities remain stunted both in their first and second language.

NOTES

1. Several other bigger studies in the recent past that included students' cognitive achievement tests have indicated clearly that the attainments of children are much lower than the expected learning outcomes for the specific grades. Therefore, we used language texts and questions of the grade 2 level to assess the students of grade 4 or 5, and only oral activities for children of grade 1.

2. The teachers are not aware of strategies that can be used to help in quick and better second language acquisition. Thus, the advantage of these schools and children in having a teacher who can communicate well with

them does not translate into better learning of the second language or other content areas.

3. This seems to suggest that the nature of home language and its linguistic similarity or dissimilarity with the school language is an important factor in the pace and ease with which a child acquires a second language. However, this is not the only or the most important factor in the acquisition of a second language. If appropriate second language acquisition strategies are used and there is adequate motivation among the children and support from the parents for learning of the second language, the linguistic distance of the child's first language would not be a major constraint.

Probably the linguistic distance would not be a very crucial factor if the children's first language (whatever it may be) had been developed beyond the age of six by acquisition of reading and writing skills and the use of the first language in an academic form. Research has shown that transfer of language skills from one language to the other is much quicker and better when the first language has been developed to a level where it is being used by the children in an academic and formal manner. Thus, the level of first language development is the most crucial factor in acquiring of a second language. But in our schools, first language development is not taken up at all.

4. Of course, the team strongly felt that the text in grade 5 everywhere was too dense (content) and difficult (in terms of language used) and could not be easily made comprehensible to the students whose second language competence (as also first language) had remained stunted.

5. In areas where the local language is considered a variant of the standard version of the regional language, *the literacy levels are high and adults are largely bilingual*, there is much higher motivation and parental pressure on children to quickly acquire the standard language. Even though the intelligibility of the standard dialect is quite low for children when they first come to school and they face serious problem of comprehension, they pick up the language quickly. This is the case of the *Mandeali* speaking population in Himachal Pradesh, Konkani speaking population in Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra, Kodava (Coorgi) population in Karnataka, Maithili speakers in Bihar, Kumaoni speakers in Uttaranchal etc.

However, in many other areas, the problem faced by children, whose home language is considered a variant or dialect of the standard language (but is actually very different using the criterion of intelligibility), is often undermined. In the absence of any structured instructional strategies for second language acquisition and a classroom teaching process that does

not use communicative, two-way interaction, such children fail to develop adequate standard language competence.

6. The use of local language alternatively with the standard language, without a systematic approach to instruction for second language acquisition, hampers the acquisition of the second language.

7. The teaching-learning process stresses rote memorisation and the language teaching methods are totally at variance with appropriate processes required for comprehensive development of higher level academic language skills. Without these skills, even students who are reading through their first language are unable to fully comprehend the content of the textbooks at the late primary and upper primary stages.

WHAT DO THEORY AND RESEARCH FINIDINGS SAY?

…. and what happens in our schools?

There is a wide range of theoretical perspectives and research findings relating to acquisition of first and second language, the benefits of mother tongue instruction and the relationship between language, thought and cognition. These issues have been looked at from psycho-linguistic, socio-linguistic, neuro-linguistic and classroom research perspectives. Also, several bilingual education programmes have been studied and evaluated to identify the impact of certain strategies for education of minority language speaking children. Theoretical perspectives and research results would not be discussed in detail in this book. While, there are several findings that seem to be inconclusive or even contradictory, there is a fair degree of consensus about certain findings and insights. Outlined below are some such theoretical perspectives and research findings that have implications for policy decisions regarding selection of language for instruction, classroom strategies that support language development, and the importance of language proficiency in overall intellectual development of children:

4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION AT THE PRIMARY STAGE

i.   When children first join school, they face a great problem in adjusting to the rigid, unfamiliar school environment where

they need to remain passive and follow instructions most of the time. This environment is very different from the home environment. The shock of this transition is much greater for children who have to learn through an unfamiliar language. *Children need to be taught in their first language to make the transition between home and school less traumatic.*

ii. A child's mind works automatically for understanding and comprehension in his/her first language. Therefore, *academic learning skills for comprehension of subject content are best acquired initially through the child's first language.*

iii. *Literacy skills, i.e. reading and writing are most easily developed in a familiar language.* It is more difficult to learn to read in a second language. Children who have learnt to read first in their first language can read much better in the second language in the later grades. One explanation for this result is that these children learn to read in their first language and then, *later and separately,* learn to understand and speak in the second. *Thus the two tasks of a) learning to read and b) learning to use a second language are separated.* These children can later transfer their reading skills to the second language. Children who had to learn to read in the second language directly face a double burden, i.e. learning to read in their second language and also learning to understand and use that language. There is also the additional burden of trying to understand a large number of new concepts along with trying to understand the new language.

iv. *A language that is unfamiliar to children should not be used as medium of instruction till they acquire basic proficiency in it.*

4.2 IMPORTANCE OF FIRST LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT THE PRIMARY STAGE; RELATIONSHIP WITH SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

i. It is incorrect to say that a child knows the first language fully by age six when he enters school. Development of academic skills in a language, called Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) by J. Cummins (1984), requires 4-6 years of formal instruction, even if it is the child's first language.[1] It is these academic skills that are crucial in

acquisition of knowledge and cognitive development. Language is used in an abstract and de-contextualised manner in the school texts, and to be able to understand this content, the child must acquire the ability to comprehend, speak and write various forms of language. This can happen only if the first language is used as a medium of instruction during the entire primary stage. If for some reason this is not possible, *development of first language should continue throughout the primary stage as a language arts subject,* even after the second language is introduced as a medium of instruction after two or three grades.

ii. Devoting instructional time to the teaching of first language does not harm the development of the second language.[2]

iii. *Conceptual and linguistic skills developed in the first language are readily transferred to the second language.* This is called the principle of 'interdependency of linguistic development', which implies that there is a common underlying proficiency for languages which makes it possible to transfer academic skills, especially literacy (reading and writing) from one language to the other.[3] The more academically developed the student's first language knowledge and ability, the easier it will be for that student to learn a second language. For this purpose, the first language of the child should be developed to a 'threshold level' before effective transfer can take place. Apart from language skills, even concepts acquired in the first language get transferred to the second language. Thus, if a child has understood the concept of 'bravery' in his first language, this concept need not be explained to him in the second language. It is enough to help the child place a new label in the second language for an already existing concept.

Thus development of the academic skills in first language is the best way of ensuring quick and better second language learning. For the development of the second language, the amount of time spent in school on the first language is more important than the amount of time spent on the second language.[4]

iv. It is not enough to develop social conversational skills in a language that is being used as a medium of instruction. Higher order language competencies, often called academic language

skills, are crucial for being able to negotiate school curriculum content in that language. Development of such language skills requires at least five years of instruction in L2.

4.3 HOW DOES SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION TAKE PLACE? IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

On the issue of second language acquisition (SLA), there are a wide variety of research findings, that are often divergent. Presented below are some hypotheses/insights that are largely considered valid:

i. Early second language acquisition happens best through a process of meaningful interaction in the language.[5] This implies that there should be *sufficient opportunity* for use of language in an *anxiety - free* environment in the classroom with *focus on meaning* rather than form in the initial stages of second language acquisition. This is especially crucial for children who are not likely to get a second language rich environment outside school. Thus, lecturing, recitation and rote memorization are not appropriate methods of teaching and learning a second language.

ii. The *inputs in second language should always be in a form comprehensible to the children.*[6] This implies that at all points of time children's understanding of L2 should be ahead of the language used in the textbooks and in the classroom for instruction. This would mean that before the L2 is used for transaction of content, children should be able to speak and understand L2 adequately. Also, the teaching materials and classroom instruction should use a form and difficulty level of L2 that is easily understood by the children. Thus, the standard textbooks would need to be significantly modified to ensure that the vocabulary and language used is at all points of time comprehensible to children with a different first language. Thus more exposure to second language is not enough. What is crucial is the *manner in which it is provided and its comprehensibility.*

There are *several ways in which the second language input,* especially when it is being used as a medium of instruction,

can be made comprehensible in the classroom. There should be careful use of language to ensure that it is understood. It should be supported by gestures, use of repetition, redundancy, use of familiar contexts; conversational orientation; performing regular comprehension checks to be sure that the children are understanding what is being said, read or written; encouraging children to respond; responding to their doubts and questions, making use of songs and rhymes and promoting child-to-child interaction. This approach is very crucial at the initial stage to ensure development of basic, oral skills in the second language. If this foundation is not put in place correctly, development of literacy and academic skills in second language will be a difficult task. A *warm, supportive environment* is also crucial at this stage in the acquisition of second language

The comprehensibility argument also implies that in the initial stages of second language learning, the focus of instruction should be on *comprehension (understanding) rather than production skills, and on content rather than form.* There should not be undue emphasis on correct pronunciation or correction of syntax used by children during early phases of oral work or too much concern over use of words or phrases of the first language (code switching or code mixing). Rather, errors during speech or writing should be seen as indicators of learning and should be used by the teacher for further guidance. This principle is, of course, equally applicable for guided first language development also.

It has been suggested that there should be a controlled vocabulary development in the second language in the first one or two years in a systematic manner. This must be reflected in the textbooks as well as in the use of language by the teachers in the classroom.

iii. Often, language classes in the early grades, focus on literacy, i.e. reading and writing skills, neglecting oral activities. *Teaching of reading and writing in the second language without adequate oral work harms or inhibits the development of the language.* While, this is true even for children learning in

their first language, it is absolutely crucial for children who are learning through a second language and who may have little exposure to the spoken second language within their home or community. The school is the only place that could provide them the opportunity for interacting in the second language, and enough scope should be provided for the children to acquire oral skills in that language before literacy instruction is started. In schools where the second language is used as the medium of instruction from grade 1, there is little time or scope to allow for development of vocabulary and oral comprehension and speech skills before the teaching of reading is initiated.

iv. Some experts have suggested that students should reach proficiency in a second language through different modes in the order of listening, speaking, reading and writing. *Curriculum developers, teacher educators and teachers need to be aware that there are several stages of second language acquisition.*[7] Awareness of these stages would mean that classroom instruction should use strategies appropriate for each stage. For example, in the initial stage when the child is verbally unresponsive and finds even listening difficult and responds non-verbally by nodding or gesturing, the focus should be on reading aloud to students, communicative/conversational interaction, use of books with pictures, providing scope for interaction with children who are native speakers of this second language. Speaking should not be forced on students initially. At a later stage, students could be asked to respond to simple questions requiring short responses. Oral language work, vocabulary development and reading aloud should continue for a long time. The teacher should know when to begin formal literacy instruction including phonemic awareness and phoneme-grapheme (sound-letter) correspondence etc. Thus, development of oral skills in the second language should be systematically pursued through classroom activities. The teachers should be aware of the intricate relationship between the development of first and second languages as well as the structural similarities and differences between the children's first and second languages. A 'communicative language teaching' methodology, that stresses the functional use of language in meaningful interaction and encourages children to express themselves through conversation, has been advocated by many researchers and

practitioners, as an appropriate approach to the teaching of second language in the early primary grades.[8]

Clearly, therefore, teaching practices, their sequence and duration would need to be carefully tailored to the need of second-language learners.

There is a contrasting point-of-view, that is also quite influential, that maintains that the best way to acquire proficiency in a second language is to use it as a medium of instruction.[9] This perspective draws support from S.D. Krashen's theory of second language acquisition that stresses that a second language is most successfully acquired when the focus of instruction is on meaning, rather than form, and when there is sufficient scope for engaging in meaningful use of that language. Proponents of this approach, also called content-centred language learning, argue that teaching academic content of various subjects helps to provide more meaning than only teaching of language which often results in a focus on form, i.e., emphasis on grammar and repeated drills devoid of meaning. This approach of integrated language and content instruction has been used in some 'second language immersion programmes' that use a second language as the medium of instruction from the first year at primary school. However, as we will discuss in Chapter 5, an immersion approach is not appropriate for deprived, rural situations in India.

Other factors that affect second language acquisition:

a. *Some languages may be more or less difficult to learn* depending on how different from or similar they are to the languages the learner already knows. However, language distance between the first and second language is not considered to be the most important factor affecting the SLA process.

b. *Prior exposure to the second language* could help in the initial stages of SLA.

c. The *attitude of the learner (student), his family and community* toward its own language and the regional language would affect the *motivation for learning the second language.* Thus, if the student's first language has a low social status and learning

the second language is considered as crucial to acquire prestige and also access to institutions of government and jobs, there would be a high motivation in the community to ensure that the children learn the regional language. This motivation definitely affects the speed and success with which a new language is acquired. Of course, the *quality of the teaching-learning process* in the initial years also impacts on the motivation for acquiring the second language. As mentioned earlier, use of *communicative, meaningful interaction oriented teaching styles would motivate students.* Teachers could also help in providing a *supportive environment* for SLA, if they do not condemn use of local dialect by children in an appropriate context, and do not completely ban the use of home language in the classroom for conversation.

d. It must be recognized that individual children vary greatly in the way they learn a second language. It is important that textbooks writers and teacher educators are sensitive to this aspect and help teachers in providing a *varied set of activities for second language acquisition* that help children with different learning styles. This is especially true of classrooms with children of diverse cultural backgrounds.

e. *In the early stages of SLA, a communication and meaning based approach that does not focus on form is more useful.* This would imply classroom activities and language teaching materials that do not explicitly teach rules of grammar or language structures but involve children in unfocussed tasks that indirectly help a child acquire the language. Of course, these tasks would need to be graded and sequenced. Alongside, there should be some emphasis to provide to second language learners some rules or norms that help in introducing the formal structure of the L2.

4.4 READING AND COMPREHENSION

It is much more difficult for a child to learn to read in an unfamiliar language. *Reading fluently with understanding is a very crucial prerequisite for learning.* An appropriate strategy for development of quick reading skills is important for all learners, but even more so for children who have little exposure

to literacy at home and are learning a new language. It is important that systematic techniques for developing quick literacy skills and reading comprehension are used in the early primary grades. These would include phonic awareness, sound-letter (phoneme-grapheme) recognition and quick decoding while engaging children in a variety of meaningful and interesting reading and writing activities. It should be remembered, however, "that sound reading skills mean skills that enable a child to associate meaning with written or printed language. Thus, reading is a process of finding meaning in written words."[10] Mere decoding skills that help a child to read mechanically would not be of much use in learning the second language.

In language teaching as well as teaching of other subjects, the *focus should be on comprehension* rather than only on the content. In the later primary and upper primary grades, the text in different subjects is quite dense and also incorporates sophisticated vocabulary, linguistic structures, rhetorical use of language and complex discourse structures. Classroom instruction, unfortunately, is based largely on the reading of these texts. It is very crucial that students learn to read fluently before that, and are also oriented to comprehension of the text being, read. If students have not developed fluency in reading and understanding of different kinds of academic use of languages, they would not be in a position to comprehend the text. Thus, the stress on systematic and intensive literacy skill development with a focus on reading comprehension from the early primary grades is crucial.

Language plays a crucial role in learning, i.e. acquisition of knowledge. Learning and thought develop together and the *development of thinking ability depends on growth in language.* Children *assimilate new concepts through language,* i.e. when they listen and talk, read and write about what they are learning and relate it to what they already know. It is not enough for children to acquire basic linguistic skills in a language for learning through that language. They need to acquire academic skills in the language of instruction to enable them to comprehend

the subject matter in the later primary and upper primary classes. The implication is that the primary classes should provide adequate structured opportunities for *development of academic skills in language through a range of graded activities of different kinds*. Inadequate language skills would constrain the ability to think and learn effectively.

Most of these principles or insights would seem to suggest that the children should first acquire some proficiency in the second language before it is used as a medium of instruction (if, for some reason their first language is not used as a medium of instruction).

Some basic guidelines for facilitating learning of language

Language is a medium for a child for several activities - to play, to direct other's activities and attention, to understand the world around it, for inquiry and reasoning. The teacher must therefore, interact with students using language in a very flexible manner that would help promote the child's ability to use language in a variety of ways. A child grows up in an environment created by language. It affects her skills, abilities, attitudes, interests and values. This language environment in school is created by the teachers. If the teacher is sensitive to the various ways in which language contributes to the child's development then she will help create a language environment that helps in the cognitive and emotional development of the child.

Teachers should encourage children to speak. Every child should feel that when she speaks, she will be heard and the teacher likes to hear the children speak. Thus, various kinds of opportunities can be provided in a class for children to speak about themselves, their experiences in school, to discuss pictures, listen to and discuss stories, act out what they like etc.

For reading too, the teacher must facilitate a positive language environment with an activity-based approach. To start with, teachers should read out stories and poems to children from books, conduct activities with words and texts while ensuring that the task of reading is enjoyable for the children.

Based on: Krishna Kumar. 2000. *The Child's Language and the Teacher*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.

These guidelines seem equally appropriate for children learning their first language or an unfamiliar second language. However,

for initiating children who have little familiarity with the second language, the skill, effort and understanding of appropriate methods required on the part of the teacher would be of a much higher order. How can all this be done when in a large number of schools, the teacher does not even know the language of the children?

4.5 HOW INAPPROPRIATE IS OUR SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND LANGUAGE POLICY!

A comparison of the medium of instruction policy and the classroom teaching practices seen across our country, and the principles or insights presented above, makes it abundantly clear that the situation in almost all our classrooms with second language learners is far from desirable. This is true of the various dimensions, viz. language used for instruction, curriculum including textbooks, language environment in the classroom, teachers' preparation and attitude to the problems of minority language speaking children. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the contrast of what is appropriate and what is actually happening in government primary schools across the country.

Table 4.1: Situation in Government primary schools in India

What is appropriate?	*What is actually happening in schools of type III, IV and V?*
1. Mother tongue should be used as the language of instruction at the primary stage.	Mother tongue is not the medium of instruction.
2. Children's first language should be developed through the entire (or most of) primary stage since it promotes cogni-tive development and second language development.	There is no scope for development of the first language.
3. Children should first learn to read in a familiar language.	Children are taught to read initially in an unfamiliar language.

What is appropriate?	What is actually happening in schools of type III, IV and V?
4. Early language acquisition should take place through meaningful interaction in a supportive, anxiety-free environ- ment. There should be sufficient opportunity for children to use language. The emphasis should not initially be on production or performance by children who are learning a new language.	The classroom environment is passive and teacher-dominated, with little scope for communicative, conversational use of second language. Children have little scope to use language. The unfamiliar language and the rigid school environment create anxiety and fear. Most of our teaching processes demand that students quickly start reciting and writing which actually stunts comprehension.
5. The second language input should be compre-hensible to children.	No effort is made to assess whether the input is comprehensible to children and the syllabus is taught without compromise or adjustment to the students' linguistic skills.
6. There should be greater stress on acquisition of oral competencies in the second language initially rather than on reading and writing.	In most classrooms across the country language teaching starts with recitation and rote memori-zation of alphabets, alphabet recognition and writing of all alphabets in a sequence followed by drills of combining alphabets to form simple words. Due to the urgency of teaching reading in grade 1, the language classes focus on the mechanics of decoding and are completely non-interactive. *This is the worst possible*

What is appropriate?	*What is actually happening in schools of type III, IV and V?*
	way in which children could be initiated into the understanding and use of a new language. Most children cannot speak fluently even in later primary grades, though they are able to read and write with limited ability.
7. Reading fluently and with comprehension is the key to learning in the later grades and this must be actively promoted and ensured in the early grades.	While decoding to read is a skill that is somehow developed (in a limited, unsystematic manner) by grade 2 or 3, and children manage to read word- by word, they do not acquire fluency; and comprehension ability is even lower. Their understanding of the second language, including vocabulary and linguistic structures, is very limited. Thus, lack of reading fluency coupled with limited understanding of the second language results in a huge burden of non-compre-hension of the texts from grade 3 onwards.
8. A variety of flexible language learning strate-gies should be used to help children acquire communicative and analytic competence in language use (acade-mic language skills).	Language and other subject matter instruction is mainly by way of teacher's lecture, reading of text and copying. It provides little scope for acquiring various kinds of language use that is so essential for effective oral expression and comprehension of subject content in higher classes.

What is appropriate?	What is actually happening in schools of type III, IV and V?
9. Teacher preparation for understanding the language and cultural back-ground of linguistic and ethnic minority children.	This awareness and attitudinal preparation is not a part of the teacher training programmes.
10. Training of teachers to understand the inter-dependence of first and second language development and appropriate second language teaching practices is crucial.	No exposure is provided to teachers on appropriate pedagogical prac-tices for second language teaching and learning.

During the past decade, several states have conducted training programmes for teachers that promote an active learning approach and the principle of construction of knowledge by the child based on his/her earlier knowledge and experiences. Most of these training programmes have stressed the need to take children from the 'known to the unknown'. However, these efforts at introducing a 'new pedagogy' seem quite hollow in situations where the children cannot even understand the language used for teaching when they first join school. *The child in such situations moves straightaway to the completely unknown.* Any initiative that professes to introduce a more active learning environment in the classrooms and reduce the emphasis on rote memorization has a chance of success only if children are being taught in their first language. Second language-based instruction in the early primary grades is bound to be teacher-

directed and unidirectional with little scope for children's participation. First language medium of instruction is definitely more conducive to a child-centred, participatory teaching approach for the simple reason that children would be in a much better position to express themselves.[11]

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion on the dichotomous classification of linguistic skills, viz. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), Jim Cummins, *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy* (Cleveland, England: Multilingual Matters, 1984).

   Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) refers to conversational skills in which oral communication is supported by contextual clues. This does not give a measure of overall proficiency in the second language. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) refers to language competencies needed for academic use of a language that is decontextualised. Such skills would be necessary for learning in a second language. These skills are interdependent for L1 and L2. The higher the level of CALP in L1, the more rapidly, this will be established in L2. refers to conversational skills in which oral communication is supported by contextual clues. There may be no relationship between this for L1 and L2. This does not give a measure of overall proficiency in the second language.

2. Jim Cummins, 'SLA within Bilingual Education Programs,' in *Issues in Second Language Acquisition: Multiple Perspectives,* ed. Leslie M. Beebe (New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1987) 145-166

   The concept of 'common underlying proficiency' is further elaborated in Jim Cummins, 'Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?' (*www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/* <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/>) as follows:

   Some educators and parents are suspicious of bilingual education or mother tongue teaching programs because they worry that these programs take time away from the majority school language. For example, in a bilingual program where 50% of the time is spent teaching through children's home language and 50% through the majority school language, surely children's learning of the majority school language must suffer? One of the most strongly established findings of educational research, conducted in many countries around the world, is that well-implemented bilingual programs can promote literacy and subject matter knowledge

in a minority language without any negative effects on children's development in the majority language. When children are learning through a minority language (e.g. their home language), they are not only learning this language in a narrow sense, they are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the majority language. Pupils who know how to tell the time in their mother tongue understand the concept of telling time. In order to tell time in the second language (e.g. the majority language), they do not need to re-learn the concept of telling time; they simply need to acquire new labels or "surface structures" for an intellectual skill they have already learned. Similarly, at more advanced stages, there is transfer across languages in academic and literacy skills such as knowing how to distinguish the main idea from the supporting details of a written passage or story, identifying cause and effect, distinguishing fact from opinion, and mapping out the sequence of events in a story or historical account."

3. Jim Cummins, 'The Role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students,' in *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework, ed.* California State Department of Education (Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles, 1981) 3-49.

4. Cummins argues- "certain aspects of the minority child's linguistic knowledge may not be fully developed on entry to school. Thus some children may have only limited access to the cognitive-linguistic operations necessary to assimilate a second language and develop literacy skills in that language."

5. S. D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982).

6. This section draws heavily from Krashen (1982). The concept of 'comprehensible input' is as follows- "The optimal input for second language acquisition should be such that it is understood by the learner. It should be relevant or interesting, should not focus on form or rigid sequencing and should be sufficient in quantity. This input should be provided in a supportive affective environment." It also draws from Wong Fillmore, who recommends a number of steps that teachers can use to ensure that the children are able to understand what is being said–using demonstrations, role-playing, presenting new information in the context of known information, frequent use of paraphrasing, using simple sentence structures, repeating the same sentence patterns and routines and tailoring questions for different levels of language competence and participation. [L. Wong Fillmore, 'Second Language Learning in children: A proposed model, in *Issues in English Language Development*, eds. R. Eshch and J.

Provinzano Rosslyn (VA: National Clearing house for Bilingual Education, 1985)].

7. Judie Haynes (*www.everythingESL.net* <http://www.everythingESL.net>) has identified the following 'four stages of second language acquisition':

- Pre-production
- Early production
- Speech emergence
- Nearly fluent

8. A succinct summary of H. D. Brown's definition of 'Communicative Language Teaching' has been provided in, Linda Orr Easthouse, 'Becoming Bilingual is a Way of Life', paper presented at Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalisation and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia, Bangkok, 6-9 November, 2003, as follows:

Communicative Language Teaching

(i) Classroom goals focus on all of the components of communication (speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking) and are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

(ii) Language activities should engage learners in a functional use of language for meaningful communication.

(iii) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency is more stressed to ensure that learners are meaningfully engaged in language use.

(iv) In a communicative classroom, students have to use language, receptively and productively in unrehearsed contexts.

These are in a way core principles based on which teaching techniques need to be worked out. Motivating children to use language is crucial to this approach. This would of course necessitate the use of local language in the classroom as also, the incorporation of local culture, traditions, history and worldview in the curriculum and teaching process.

For a more detailed discussion on principles of language teaching, see H.D. Brown, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1994)

9. This approach draws upon Krashen's distinction between *learning* (knowledge acquired consciously in a formal environment) and *acquisition* (knowledge acquired subconsciously under natural conditions). "Language is best taught when it is used to transit messages; not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning. Most of a second language (SL) cannot be taught, it must be acquired," claims Krashen. Unconsciously acquired knowledge of the SL is responsible for SL performance and conscious

knowledge of grammar rules of SL is rarely accessible for use in natural communication.

10. Krishna Kumar, *The Child's Language and the Teacher* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 2000), provides convincing arguments for the use of appropriate language activities in the classroom.

11. This was quite clear during the observation of two primary schools in the same village of Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh, one that had a teacher who did not know Mawasi, the first language of the children; and the other where the teacher belongs to the local Mawasi community. The children in the second school were looking more involved in the classroom and were also less fearful of the teacher.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR LANGUAGE MINORITY CHILDREN

There are hardly any educational strategies in operation in our country for children whose first language is not the state's official language or the dominant language of the region and, therefore, not the medium of instruction. Therefore, the analysis of educational strategies for such children presented in Table 5.1 is with reference to programmes being implemented in other countries. Many of these programmes are being implemented in countries in North America and Europe that are not linguistically or culturally very diverse and the language minority children usually belong to immigrant communities, e.g. Spanish speaking children in the United States of America. In a later section, large and small scale programmes being implemented in linguistically diverse, developing or underdeveloped countries, whose situation is more akin to that of India, have also been outlined very briefly. This *simplistic* overview is being presented only to help the readers get an idea of the range of possible strategies that have been used elsewhere.

5.1 TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

The first three strategies in Table 5.1 are **monolingual L2** programmes, i.e. there is no use of the children's L1 in

the classrooms at any stage. The general assumption of monolingual models is that it is important to develop literacy and content area in the majority language only. The second language is learnt best when students are exposed to it for the maximum period of time at school. Such models follow the position that with some initial exposure, most children can acquire fluency in L2. Proponents of the monolingual approach believe that time spent in developing L1 literacy actually delays the acquisition of L2 in bilingual programmes. Bilingualism, they feel, is a hindrance to the learning of the majority language.

The first, i.e. **L2 submersion** programme is one where the language minority child is submerged from the initial year in an L2 only environment and receives the same instructions as children who are native speakers of the language of instruction. There is no effort to use the child's L1 in any manner whatsoever or even use L2 in a form that is understood by the language minority children.

In contrast to submersion programmes, a very broad category of monolingual and bilingual programmes are called **'immersion'** programmes since they recognize the special needs of minority language children and provide inputs in L2 which are in a form that is understood by children.[1] These immersion programmes could be monolingual (L2) or bilingual programmes, which use both L1 and L2. These programmes, however, use the second language (L2) as the medium of instruction from the initial stage. L2 immersion programmes usually provide a bilingual teacher, fluent in the children's first language and appropriate teaching strategies that ensure that the language used in the classroom is comprehensible to children.

Bilingual education (BE) covers a wide variety of programmes that include learning of L1 and also learning through L1 in addition to L2. **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)** programmes, the most common educational strategies for minority language children, begin

with literacy in L1 and also use L1 as the medium of instruction in the initial grades. Later, literacy in L2 is introduced and then L2 is used as the medium of instruction in the later primary grades. For some time, both L1 and L2 may be used as mediums of instruction for different subjects. TBE programmes differ significantly in their approach to the teaching of L1. At one end of the spectrum are the **early-exit** transitional bilingual programmes that use first language instruction merely as a stop-gap arrangement till the students can be taught in the second language. Here, the basic effort is to 'mainstream' a student after he/she has attained basic L2 proficiency so that he/she can learn in an L2 only classroom.[2] Till such time, instruction takes place in the child's L1. Thus the teaching of L1 is an educational support and the message is that the first language is of lesser importance. Often, the exit/mainstreaming is planned very early, when the student has only gained oral fluency in the L2. This does not provide adequate time to develop his/her L1 to a level where it can help in transfer of academic skills to L2.

The more appropriate approach to Transitional BE holds that *learning L1 and using L1 as medium of instruction initially* would result in better and quicker learning of the second language, better achievement levels in other subjects and greater self esteem of language minority students. Some transitional bilingual education programmes implement a **late-exit**, i.e. the grade at which the transition to L2 as a medium of instruction is made is usually a late primary grade, say grade 3 or 4, by which time there has been sufficient development of L1 skills to ensure that the gains are transferred to learning through L2. Most of these programmes continue some L1 instruction till grade 6. Most transitional bilingual education programmes generally use second language teaching strategies to teach L2, while some introduce the second language by using it to transact content. *The most crucial issue in TBE is the implementation of the gradual transition from the first to the second language.*

At the other end of the spectrum of bilingual programmes are **bilingual L1 maintenance programmes,** also called L1 bilingual immersion programmes that aim to develop and maintain oral and literacy skills in both the languages. This is also called additive bilingual education, where the introduction of the second language does not mean that L1 automatically gets eroded or damaged. Ideally, both languages are taught as subjects as well as used equally as mediums of instruction. Minority language children become fully proficient in both languages by the end of primary stage (usually grade 6). Later, they shift to L2 as the medium of instruction.

Intercultural bilingual education (IBE) goes beyond the usual full bilingual programmes that use the children's first language by incorporating socio- cultural elements, traditions, knowledge and practices of the societies to which the learners belong. The approach promotes mutual respect for each other's cultures in a diverse group of learners and also a positive attitude about their own culture and society. Curriculum implementation takes place through the children's first language as well as the second language. Apart from development of L1, the approach stresses the inclusion of the history, knowledge and socio-cultural elements of the society to which the children belong into the curriculum and teaching practice.

In **Two-way developmental programmes,** minority language speaking and majority language speaking children share a classroom at the primary stage. Both languages are used for instruction, according to a plan. The aim is that both groups of children-minority and majority language speakers- become fully proficient in both languages by the end of grade 6. The majority language then becomes the medium of instruction; but in some cases, the minority language is included as a subject at the secondary stage too.

Language revitalization programmes are programmes which aim to revitalize an endangered language

by several initiatives, one of them being inclusion of a first language component in school education. In New Zealand, the Maori education programme introduced Maori as a medium of instruction in the early grades, while the Chom revitalization programme in China included Chom language as a subject in grades 3 and 4. The inclusion of the mother tongue in primary education is only one of the several steps that are taken for revitalisation of the language. When the MT is introduced in the later grades, a reverse bridging from the main regional language is undertaken to introduce understanding and reading and writing skills in the mother tongue.

These programmes have been initiated in a few contexts where the indigenous language is on the decline and children no longer speak that language. Only some community elders know or speak that language. However, such situations, which are common in several parts of our country also, are not the focus of this study. We are mainly concerned with language situations where the children have acquired a language by the time of entry at school that is not used as the medium of instruction.

In bilingual education programmes, where two languages are used for instruction, they are usually used separately, in a structured manner. Usually, there would be separate teachers for the two languages, and the two languages may be used on alternating days, morning/afternoon, and for different subjects. Some programmes, however, use both languages in all the subjects simultaneously. Bilingual instruction where bilingual teachers frequently alternate languages in order to provide explanation in L1 to facilitate comprehension of subject matter, without a structured transition approach, is not an appropriate way of instruction. In such situations, since students know that everything would be explained in L1, they would tend to 'switch off' when L2 is used and acquisition of L2 would be delayed or stunted.[3]

Table 5.1 : Classification of Strategies to help language minority children'

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/ assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monoling-ual/biling-ual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
1.	L2 Submersion programmes (sink or swim strategy)	Takes no cognizance of students limited understanding of L2	Normal instruction L2 for all students. No structured support for early L2 learning	L2	No	Monolingual	No special strategy	No	
2.	Stand-alone English as second language (ESL) classes	Students with limited English Proficiency (LEP) need some help to be able to fuction in English only classrooms	Students with LEP taken out of regular classrooms for language based instruction for L2	L2	No	Monolingual	Teaching of English as a language-teaching approach	No	One or two years ESL instruction may be for 1-2 classes a day or even less

Table 5.1: *Contd.*

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monolingual/bilingual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
3.	Structured monolingual immersion programme (conent based ESL)	The best way to learn L2 is by teaching in L2. However, teachers need to be aware of L2 proficiency of children and use appropriate level of L2. Does not recognize importance of L1 promotion	Modified comprehensible input is used for teaching through L2 i.e. vocabulary and language structures that can be understood by the students. Teachers trained specially for content-based teaching of L2.	L2	No L1 promotion (except in some cases for a brief period to help students adjust)	Monolingual	L2 is learnt through instruction in content areas. However, L2 input is carefully structured to make it comprehensible to students	Yes	Till students acquire grade level proficiency when they can be mainstreamed

Table 5.1: *Contd.*

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/ assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monoling- ual/biling- ual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
4.	L2 bilingual immersion programme	L2 is learnt best through immersion in L2 and teaching through it. However, some L1 literacy promotion is important	Instruction is provided through L2 from the initial stage. Some literacy promotion of L1 is being undertaken, often throughout the primary stage. Allows students to ask questions in L2, but teachers use only L2.	L2 (in Canada, English speaking students are imm- ersed in a French L2 class- room environ- ment from kinder- garten stage. Later in grade 2/3 English is	L1 literacy is promoted throughout the primary stage. In some pro- grammes, it is only 1-2 hours of instruction in a day.	Bilingual	L2 used as a medium from the beginning, content is modified to make it comprehen- sible	Yes	For the entire primary stage

Table 5.1: *Contd.*

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/ assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monolingual/bilingual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of modified strategy
				introduced as a MOI and both English and French are used as MOIs at the primary Age.					
5.	Transitional bilingual education (often called early-exit TBE)	Aims at early transition of students to L2 only classrooms as soon as students develop basic L2 proficiency. Initial instruction is through L1.	Initial literacy and instruction is through L1. L2 is initiated either through language classes or through academic content. By grade 2 about 50% of the classes are in	L1 Initially (for 1-2 years) then L2. In some programmes L1 input is confined to a few hours a day in grade 1.	Literacy first developed in L1. L1 is also medium of instruction for 1-2 years. After transition to L2, there is no effort at L2 development	Bilingual	In some programs oral skills in L2 are developed first, followed by literacy in L2. Then L2 is used for content instruction.	L2 input is modified initially.	2-3 years after which students are mainstreamed to L2 only classes. Sometimes the mainstreaming is

Table 5.1: Contd.

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monolingual/bilingual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
			L1 and remaining in L2. By grade 3, most of the classes are in L2. The students are then mainstreamed to L2 only classrooms. Often students continue for more than 3 years in TBE programme.				In some progammes L2 is used as a medium of instruction after first year.		even earlier e.g. when students acquire oral English language proficiency
6.	L1 bilingual immersion or late-exit transitional bilingual	Objective is not only to help child to make transition to	Literacy initially in L1. L1 is used as a medium of instruction till	L1 initially, then both L1 and L2	L1 development continues throughout the primary	Bilingual	L2 introduced orally followed by literacy in content	When L2 is used directly for content	Six years— entire primary stage.

Table 5.1: Contd.

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monoling-ual/biling-ual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
	programmes	make the child literate and fluent in both languages. L1 promotion is actively pursued.	grade 3. Oral work in L2 may be introduced early followed by literacy in L2 around grade 3. Thereafter, both L1 and L2 used as medium of instruction till the end of primary level.				L2. Sometimes, L2 is also used for content area instruction directly.	L2 input is modified to make it comprehensible.	
7.	Two - way developmental bilingual education (L1 & L2 are first languages of some of the children	Development of high levels of proficiency in two languages. Thus minority	Language majority and language minority students are taught together. Both languages are used as	L1 & L2, which are first languages of the two categories of children in the same classroom.	First language development is promoted for both language groups.	Bilingual	Both languages (L1 & L2) used as medium of instruction.	Yes. Content is modified to ensure that the input is comprehensible.	Entire primary stage. After that students can be mainstreamed into

Table 5.1: Contd.

S. No.	Name of Programme	Philosophy/ assumption	Basic strategy	Language of instruction	Development of L1 skills	Teachers monolingual/bilingual	Method of L2 instruction	Is L2 input modified	Duration of strategy
	in the same classroom.)	students will become literate in their native language and L2. And L2 native speakers will develop proficiency in second language. Both language groups will develop positive attitudes towards the two languages and the two communities and also a positive self-image.	mediums of instruction from initial stage. The proportion of instruction and time spent in each language may vary from programme to programme. By grade 4, almost equal time is spent on instruction in both languages.						regular classes in one medium.

Gains from Bilingual Programmes

- In Haiti, Creole speaking students learning through their first language, Creole, performed as well in French as those who were studying only through French.

- In Nigeria, Yoruba speaking students learning in grades 1 to 6 through Yoruba performed better in achievement tests in English, the second language, than their peers who had been learning only till grade 3 in the first language.

- In Gautemala, by grade 3, students who have studied in Mayan, their first language, performed better in Spanish than other Mayan-speaking children who had received Spanish only instruction.

- In the United States, Navajo students learning in a bilingual education programme through Navajo and English throughout the primary level had higher scores in achievement tests than their Navajo-speaking peers who studied only through English.

- In the United States, Spanish speaking students in late-exit programs where they were learning through both Spanish and English were catching up with the English speaking students in English and other subjects, while their Spanish speaking peers studying through English only or early-exit programmes were falling behind. The beneficial effects of bilingual education are more evident at the upper primary and secondary stages of education.

- In two studies with kindergarten children, it was seen that children undergoing bilingual programmes acquired communicative skills in the second language that were superior to those of children who studied in English-only programmes

- A detailed study of Afrikaans language-background children in South Africa, that compared the effect of bilingual and English monolingual schools, has shown that bilingual education seemed especially appropriate for children who are less bright and who face a greater disadvantage when the second language is directly used as a medium of instruction.

- In New Zealand, a recent study has shown that Maori children who received basic education in their own language performed better than those educated in English-only schools.

- A longitudinal study of over 40,000 children in 15 states of USA conducted between 1985 and 1996 by Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier of George Mason University compared achievement levels of students at the high school level in six types of educational programmes. Four of these six programmes had some degree of instruction through students' first languages. The study has shown that students who received some initial instruction in their first language did better on tests in high school than those who had studied in English-only programmes. Also, those students who had received five to six years of instruction in their first language at the elementary stage did better than those who had received only one to three years of instruction in their first language.

Most of these models include a primary stage of kindergarten to grade 6, i.e. seven to eight years of education.[5] This categorization of the various approaches to teaching of language minority students does not however clearly describe the classroom transaction in such strategies. The way the teaching-learning process is conducted including the extent of use of first language, the extent of effort put in by the teacher to ensure comprehensible L2 input etc. varies greatly. Apart from the issue of languages used for instruction, there is of course, huge variability in the classroom teaching strategies used, e.g. the extent of participation by children, use of activities for instruction. Very often, these variables have a strong influence on the quality of instruction. The methodology of teaching language also affects the quality of second language learning. When L2 is introduced through a passive learning environment involving only recitation or copying or repetitive decoding work, the rate and quality of acquisition would definitely be more limited compared to a classroom where adequate scope for conversation and a range of oral activities is provided prior to literacy instruction.

5.2　IMPACT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Research results on the impact of bilingual education and their comparisons with monolingual programmes are open to various interpretations because of methodological problems. However, the analysis of findings of some methodologically sound evaluations have shown the greater effectiveness of bilingual programmes for language minority children. These are presented below.[6]

i.　*Initial learning in L1 does not delay or cause problems in learning of L2.* It actually helps the children to catch up with the native L2 speaking children in language, reading and mathematics in later grades.

ii.　*Students who have initially learned in their first language perform better in other academic subjects in their later grades* (elementary and secondary). Thus, students who participated in late-exit bilingual programmes (where instruction through

L1 is continued throughout primary stage) or programmes where some first language development continued throughout the primary stage, even after the switch to the second language as medium of instruction, seem to show better results than those students who went through second language immersion or very early-exit transitional education programmes. Thus, first language instruction, in the initial years of school, results in better achievements of children in the second language as well as other subjects in the later years of elementary school and even at the secondary stage.

iii. *Teaching that promotes development of L1 skills, also helps to develop an underlying cognitive and academic proficiency that facilitates transfer of such skills to the second language.* Therefore, for language minority students, L1 skills can be strongly promoted and they would help in development of L2 skills.

iv. *The language used in instruction must be comprehensible to the students.* Thus, mere more exposure to L2 is not enough for L2 acquisition.

v. *Learning academic- second language takes up to six years or more.*

These generalisations clearly support promotion of the child's first language (since it in no way harms or delays acquisition of second language), and the need to provide comprehensible input in L2 for language minority children, whenever the second language is used.

However, these generalisations cannot be seen as representative of all bilingual education programmes. Many bilingual education programmes in different countries have failed to show desired results. The causes include- the ineffective manner in which some programmes are implemented in the classrooms or the disadvantaged socio-economic background of the language minority children enrolled in these programmes.

5.3 CHOICE OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

While it is quite clear that initial instruction in children's L1 and promotion of L1 development at the primary stage has beneficial results, this is more crucial in certain situations.

Nadine Dutcher concludes that the choice of language to be used as the medium of instruction in the initial grades of primary school depends on certain characteristics of individual situations.[7] (Table 5.2)

Table 5.2: Medium of Instruction: First or second language?

Characteristics of the specific situation	First language more appropriate (Type I)	Second language is appropriate (Type II)
1. Development of child's first language to the level where prerequisites for acquiring literacy are available.	Not developed to this level.	First language developed to this level.
2. Parents' view of language.	Parents want instruction in first language and/or there is little pressure on the home/community for literacy/language maintenance in first language.	Parents want instruction in second language, but expect the child to also use and read in the first language.
3. Wider community's view of the child's first and second language.	First language has a lower social and economic status.	First language has a status that is as high as, or higher than, the second language.

The use of second language has been considered appropriate or effective only in cases where the students belong to a highly literate society, the children's first language has a high status and instruction in a second language is chosen by the parents as a free choice. Also, this could be considered when students have already received a few years' instruction through their first language. The parents also support the promotion of first language at some stage in the curriculum. The most successful example of such a programme is the 'French immersion' Programme for English speaking students in Canada.

In almost all the eight school situations and the four block and district situations reviewed in this study, the conditions are of the Situation Type I (see table 9), i.e. the child's first language has a lower social and economic status in the community and there is little pressure within the home to develop literacy in the first language. Also, by the time the child enrolls in school, his/her first language is not developed to a level that is appropriate for literacy development. In most cases, parents are interested in the use of a second language as the medium of instruction. There is usually no interest in the development of skills in the first language. Moreover, there is little exposure to the second language outside the school. Therefore, they need a fairly long period of time in school, during which they can acquire the second language without the anxiety of having to read and write in it from the beginning. *These are conditions where the first language should be used in the initial stages as medium of instruction to ensure better achievement in language and other content areas.*

5.4 AN OVERVIEW OF SOME EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR LANGUAGE MINORITY CHILDREN

Educational Programmes in USA

Transitional bilingual education programmes

These are the most common programmes for students whose first language is not English. They cater mainly to Spanish speaking children. The strategy is to use Spanish in early grades, while English is either taught as a second language or used as a medium partially. As soon as children gain some fluency in English, they are mainstreamed into regular English-only classrooms. The transition usually happens at the end of grade 3 or 4. However, there are some states that implement bilingual programmes that continue in to the secondary stage of schooling also. These are late-exit transition programmes.

Structured second language immersion programmes

The second language is used as a medium of instruction from the initial stage, but with a modified curriculum to ensure comprehensibility for children with a different first language. The proponents of this approach frequently challenge the need for, and efficacy of, bilingual programmes, arguing that structured English immersion programmes are best for early integration of students with limited English proficiency.

English as second language classes:

Here, limited English proficiency students are pulled out of the regular classes for some part of the day and taught English as a second language till they gain reasonable proficiency in English to cope with the regular class where English is being directly used as a medium of instruction.

Programmes in Illinois state: an outline

In 1973, Illinois (USA) passed a legislation that made it mandatory for school districts to offer a Transitional Bilingual Education Programme (TBE), whenever there are 20 or more Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students with a common native language enrolled in a school. TBE programmes are required to be taught by a certificated teacher who is fluent in the native language of the students. Whenever there are fewer than 20 LEP students of a common native language at a school, a Transitional Programme of Instruction (TPI) may be provided in lieu of a TBE programme. TPI programmes involve a variety of services, including part time instruction in English as second language, use of tutors and aids in the classroom and other native language resource persons (parents, peers and volunteers from the community).

If possible, LEP students are placed in classes with other students of similar age and grade levels. However, other methods of grouping are also followed, based on language proficiency and cognitive ability (with different age and grade levels) or flexible grouping patterns, including pulling out students for tutoring. Most students are transitioned to mainstream classes in four years, though the programme envisages transition after three years.

78 per cent of the students in Illinois bilingual education programmes are Spanish speakers. These programme served more students of more than 45 native languages. The number of students in bilingual programme decreases in higher grades.

For certain category of students (under the Emergent Immigrant Programme) who were not born in the United States and who have been attending schools in the US for less than 3 years, a more comprehensive set of programme services are offered which go beyond the TBE/TPI. These include tutorials, mentoring, family literacy, parent outreach activities and purchase of materials/equipments.

The approach adopted by most states in the USA is guided by the principle that cultural and linguistic diversity is a 'problem' and potentially divisive. The focus is on 'assimilation' of the students into the mainstream language and culture. Thus, educational interventions seek to 'iron-out' the diversity by providing for early learning of English and discouraging use of the children's mother tongue.

Other appropriate educational programmes[8]

Most of the transitional bilingual education programmes in the West are meant for language minority students whose first language is a well developed written language, e.g. Spanish. Thus, there are no issues relating to development or standardization of a language for its use as a medium of instruction. Also, these programmes do not place any value on the use of local culture and knowledge in the school curriculum. The stress is on ways of ensuring the use of the local language as an instrument for better learning of the second language and academic content. However, there are examples of several successful programmes and first language promotion policies in countries of Africa, Latin America and Far-East Asia, working in situations with high socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, very similar to those in several parts of India. Presented below are very brief outlines of some of these programmes or educational policies:

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has more than 800 languages. English was being used as the medium of instruction from grade 1 in the government schools. As a part of a major reform in the primary education system, a new stage of education called 'elementary school' was introduced in the 1990s consisting of preparatory, grade 1 and 2 (a total of three years) located within a settlement, with locally selected village level teachers.[9] After the elementary school is the 'primary school' with grades 3 to 8, in English medium, that is more centrally located, in a big village. Preparatory is a school-readiness, basic literacy and numeracy programme in the local language. In grade 1, basic education is in the local language with an activity-based curriculum and integration of elements from the local culture. In grade 2, education is in the local language with an introduction to English. Complete bridging to English is achieved in the second part of grade 2, or in the first year of primary school (grade 3). The curriculum in the primary school is not based on the local culture and the teachers may not know the local language. Therefore, the bridging between the elementary and primary schools is very crucial. The three years of elementary school are treated as an integrated whole, rather than three separate grades.

The elementary school component has very strong elements of community partnership. The curriculum materials, including basic readers, story-books and illustrated 'big-books', are developed locally with the help of the community in more than 400 languages. The teachers are community-members selected locally. The Programme has a strong component of teachers' development and an academic guidance and support system. By 2001, elementary schools were functioning in more than 400 languages. While there has not been any systematic evaluation, some assessments have shown that children who go through the three year mother tongue-based education learn to read and write English better, and are also more confident and active in the following grades, than children who only study through English from their first grade.

This Programme was initiated based on the success of the *Tok Ples Priskuls* (village vernacular pre-schools) in the '80s and '90s. These village level pre-school classes were held in more than 200 local languages as a non-formal programme preparatory to the formal primary school where the teaching was in English. These pre-schools were initiated based on a community demand for relevant education of their children, including local village values to prevent alienation from the village life and culture. A recent evaluation has indicated that the motivation of communities to education in the local languages was not because of its pedagogical value but due to the ability of the Programme to build strong relationships and links with the language, culture and values of the home community.

Dong Language Programme in China:

This Programme has two years of pre-primary classes in which the focus is on oral language development in the children's first language, viz. Dong, and on acquiring reading and writing skills in that language. The children are then introduced gradually to oral and written Chinese. Over the six years of primary school, the time devoted to Chinese increases each year and the students are able to achieve the prescribed standards for Chinese language learning by the time they finish grade 6. Dong language (and culture) continues to be taught throughout the six years of primary stage. Such a programme is often called, a one-way developmental bilingual education programme or a 'late-exit' transitional programme.

Highland Children's Education Project, Ratnakiri Province, Combodia (supported by CARE)[10]

This project aims to establish local schools that are managed by the local community in a highland area with indigenous people whose language and culture is totally distinct from the mainstream Khmer culture. The first 3 years of primary education would be in the local language. The local languages have been written as a part of this programme in the Khmer script. The curriculum has been developed based on the daily

lives of the Highland minority people. The national curriculum is used as a model. In grade 1, approximately 80 per cent of the instruction is in the local language. The proportion of Khmer instruction increases to 40 per cent in grade 2, 70 per cent in grade 3, and then entirely in Khmer in grade 4, to enable students to enter the government education system. The use of first language is encouraged to support the learning of Khmer. The subject of 'socio-cultural studies' is taught in the first language even during the stage of transition to Khmer. The approach to teaching is student-centred, using a variety of activities and the environment as a teaching resource.

There is an intensive teacher training programme, including a six month pre-service induction course and a two year in-service programme.

Haiti, Education in 'Creole'

In the 1980s, Haiti, where French was the medium of instruction in all primary schools, introduced a major reform by which Creole, (which has almost 95 per cent of words borrowed from French) was made the medium of instruction in grades 1 to 4. French is introduced orally in grade 1, and literacy in French is initiated in grade 3. From grade 5 onwards, French is the medium of instruction. The implementation of this reform has not been very satisfactory and teacher preparation was not adequately addressed.

Nigeria, Mother tongue policy for education

Education in grades 1 to 3 is in the mother tongue, or the dominant language of the community, and in English in grades 4 to 6. An experimental project was implemented with 6 years of education in one regional language, Yoruba, with English being taught as a subject for grade 2 to 6. The results showed that students who studied in Yoruba for 6 grades performed better than those who had Yoruba as medium of instruction for 3 grades only.

Philippines, Bilingual education policy

Shifting from the earlier policy of English as the medium of instruction, Philippines introduced a bilingual education policy. From grade 1 to 10 English is used for English language, science and mathematics subjects and Filipino for all other subjects. Filipino is a language based mainly on Tagalog, the language spoken by 24 per cent of the population, mainly in Manila area. The local vernaculars (Filipino is not the mother tongue of any group) are to be used only in grades 1 and 2 and only when necessary to help in understanding of what is being taught in English and Filipino. The use of the local languages to help in transition to Filipino and English has not been supported officially.

The bilingual policy has been blamed for deterioration in English skills of students in Philippines. Evaluations have shown that Filipino-speaking students gained significantly through use of Filipino as the medium. However, teacher preparation was not adequate. Also, more effort should have been made to generate public awareness and debate on the issue of mother tongue instruction prior to the change. Performance of students of other community languages was poor. The use of minority (vernacular) languages to help in transition to Filipino should be encouraged.

Guatemala National Programme for Bilingual education

Half of Gautemala's population speaks indigenous Mayan languages as their mother tongue, while the other half speak Spanish. In the 1960s, a programme was started to teach Spanish to children in pre-primary classes with the help of bilingual helpers from 10 different Mayan language groups.

By 1994, bilingual education was introduced in about 800 schools. About half of these schools offered instruction in a Mayan language at the pre-primary, grade 1 and 2, while the remaining had only pre-primary classes in a Mayan language. Almost 30 per cent of the Mayan languages speaking school-going children are enrolled in bilingual primary schools. Only

the original 40 schools continued to be bilingual till grade 4. In these original bilingual schools, at the pre-primary level, 85-90 per cent time is spent in instruction in the Mayan language. The time for Mayan languages progressively reduces from 80 per cent in grade 1, to 60 per cent in grade 2 and then 50 per cent in grades 3 and 4. The time for Spanish increases proportionately. In grade 5, the instruction is entirely in Spanish. The teachers are bilingual. The number of schools offering bilingual education (mainly in pre-primary and grade 1) was about 1200 in 1999, with a gross enrolment of 230,000 children; almost 20 per cent of all school-going children in Gautemala. 14 local languages are used in these schools.

The implementation has been of variable quality, i.e. not all schools have included all components of the bilingual approach, viz. appointment of bilingual teachers, teacher training, use of special materials and acceptance by teachers of the bilingual education philosophy. Schools, where all elements have not been successfully implemented, have shown limited results.

PROPELCA Programme, Northwest Cameroon

In grades 1 and 2, reading and writing and other subjects are taught in the mother tongue and English is taught as a subject. By grades 3 and 4, substantial amount of English is used, yet discussion in mother tongue is encouraged. Thus, academic and cognitive development takes place in the mother tongue in the early grades and there is a controlled and non-stressful environment for the learning of English as a second language. This is possible because English is learnt without the pressure of having to learn all other subjects in it. Students in PROPELCA classrooms acquire superior reading and writing skills and also subject knowledge. Such classrooms are also more participative. This approach is being used in Cameroon presently in 29 languages. Language teaching uses a 'multi-pronged' approach using a *'story track'* and a *'primer track'*. The story track approach promotes comprehension and active

thinking and oral/written expression. The primer track is useful for learning decoding and building new words.

Rock point Navajo Community school, USA

In the USA, the number of speakers of indigenous languages has been steadily declining. The Rock Point was initially an English medium school. In the 1970s, a bilingual, bicultural programme was evolved with community involvement. Navajo (an Indian language) is used orally in Kindergarten. In grade I, students learn to read in Navajo, and in grade 2 they begin to read in English in addition to continuing to read in Navajo. Teaching of Navajo and some subjects in Navajo continues to the secondary school level. The results have shown that students who have received bilingual education did better in all subjects than Navajo students studying only in English. It has also helped in developing greater respect and understanding of Navajo culture, forgotten songs, dances, crafts and tradition.

Senegal local languages programme

Since 2002, six local languages have been used in 155 schools in the initial grades. At pre-school level, the children are to be taught entirely in their first language, 75 per cent of the time in grade 1, and 50 per cent of the time in grade 2 and 3. After that, the instruction would be mostly in French.

Ngbaka Mother Tongue Instruction Programme in Congo

A literacy programme was being implemented in Ngbaka language since 1983 in a remote northwestern part of Congo with the help of SIL. In 1983, a pilot programme was initiated in three primary schools for Ngbaka children who could not speak Lingala, the language of instruction. By 2003, this programme was spread to 70 schools. Only Ngbaka is used in grade 1. The second grade introduces Lingala and third introduces French. In grades 1 and 2, the other subjects are taught entirely in Ngbaka. The programme has resulted in improved achievement levels and reduced dropout rates.

National Mother Tongue Programme, Eritrea

After independence in 1993, the government introduced a policy of using mother tongues for the first five grades of primary education. From grade 6, English is used for instruction. Recent evaluations of the education programme has indicated several weak areas, including the teaching of reading in grade 1, the need for appropriate and adequate materials for children in the various mother tongues, need for improved teacher training and graded materials in the mother tongues, and the need for strengthening the understanding of English by grade 5.

5.5 WHAT IS THE LEARNING FROM THESE PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES?

i. Many of these programmes have been implemented in situations where a foreign language, e.g. English/Spanish/French was being used as a medium of instruction as a legacy of the colonial times. Thus, the national resolve and political will to initiate instruction in local languages was quite strong.

ii. Many of these programmes, except the 'early-exit' transitional bilingual programmes in Western countries, have been implemented on a pilot basis. The exception is the Papua New Guinea programme that is being implemented in a large number of local languages throughout the country. Several programmes have not been able to sustain the intensive effort required for language development, curriculum development, teacher training and community involvement over the years. Scaling up to more languages and a large number of schools have resulted in loss of quality and the comprehensive nature of the inputs required for successful bilingual programmes.

iii. Political support, a national consensus and high visibility are crucial in ensuring success for such far-reaching educational policies.

iv. Most programmes initially faced a problem of inadequate expertise in the local languages, including linguists, material

developers and teacher trainers. However, a comprehensive and intensive capacity building process was initiated through the developmental stages in the more successful programmes. For example, in the Papua New Guinea and HCEP in Combodia, there were few writers for children's materials in the local languages, but during the initial stages of these programmes a lot of talent was discovered and developed through long workshops with community representatives, local teachers and indigenous educated persons. Development of human resources in hitherto isolated communities by providing opportunities for professional and intellectual growth can be an important by-product of the educational policy.

v. Successful programmes have been based on intensive community involvement and community ownership. Most smaller programmes include a continuing component of involvement of parents and community in the programme at the school level. Wherever a community demand for education in mother tongue existed or could be created, the programme was on more stable ground and could be sustained.

vi. Bilingual programmes require an intensive developmental phase and comprehensive inputs of teacher development, engagement of bilingual teachers, use of specially developed materials in first and second languages, regular supervision and academic support. If all the inputs are not provided effectively, the transition to the second language cannot be implemented properly and the achievement levels of students in the second language and other subjects would not be up to the desired levels. In most programmes that have been implemented on a large scale, the quality and 'completeness' of all inputs has been varied, resulting in variable quality.

vii. Almost all these programmes use one or two years of pre-primary schooling to build oral fluency in the first language and begin some literacy activities in L1. In some programmes, L2 is introduced in conversations gradually. This is useful because it allows for some oral competence in the language before there is pressure in the early grades of primary to start reading and writing activities.

viii. Adequate financial support must be available for a long period to ensure that all the developmental processes and mechanisms of teacher development and academic supervision are implemented as planned.

ix. Many of these programmes have developed a curriculum for the mother tongue instruction component in the initial grades that is based on the local culture and world- view of the students' community. Thus local history, tradition, knowledge, folk songs become the basis for the teaching learning materials and classroom transaction. This is usually done through participative processes involving the community.

x. Several of these programmes, especially the bigger ones did not succeed in bringing about a change in the way language is taught. The methods for teaching of language continued to be repetition and rote oriented. This has reduced the gains that could have come about through the introduction of the children's first language, a language that the children know, can converse in and use to engage in a variety of language activities to build their academic skills. The effectiveness of the transition to the second language also can be reduced if appropriate techniques are not used.

xi. The *bridging* or transition to the second language is the most crucial part of a transitional bilingual education programme. This is often a weak link in some programmes, resulting in the children having inadequate skills in the second language at the time when the medium of instruction is shifted to the second language.

xii. The performance of children undergoing bilingual programmes (in L2 and other subjects) should be compared with children who have studied through an L2 medium from the beginning, only in the later elementary grades, say grade 6 to 8. It is not appropriate to expect children studying through a bilingual programme to achieve results in L2, equivalent to those of children who are mother tongue speakers of L2, in the early grades.

xiii. Gains from bilingual programmes are likely to be limited if the approach is not fully followed in the classroom transaction. Several bilingual programmes have not shown expected results

since some elements e.g. teacher's bilingual ability or attitude, bridging strategy or graded materials in L1 and L2 remained deficient.

The Bridge Metaphor

When children enter the first grade, it is as though they are standing on a high cliff overlooking a fast-flowing river. Across the river, on the other end of the cliff, stands the first grade teacher. The cliff upon which the children stand, represents what the children already know, their knowledge structures, and their model of the world which have been developed on the basis of their first language and culture. The cliff upon which the teacher stands represents all that is unknown to the children-reading, writing, math, English, Filipino and civics. Since there is no bridge, the first grade teacher attempts to throw a rope across the chasm to the children on the other side. This rope represents the use of the vernacular without a planned bridging program. Even if the children can catch the rope, they still need to climb down the side of the cliff, swim across the river, and climb up the side of the cliff upon which the teacher stands-a tremendously difficult task for young children. As a result many children will fail and be swept away by the fast current of the river. This is a metaphor for failure to learn.

Source: Lou Hohulin, 'The First Language Bridging Component,' working paper, SIL, 1995.

5.6 APPROACHES TO BRIDGING TO THE SECOND LANGUAGE

In most transitional education programmes, the transition/ bridging component is weak and not systematically planned. The second language is initiated in grade 1 or 2, initially orally, and then for reading and writing. Once the children develop fluency and comprehension (appropriate to that grade), the second language is introduced as a medium of instruction, replacing the first language. In some approaches (content-centred second language instruction), the second language is introduced directly for transaction of content, albeit in a form (vocabulary, sentence structures) that is understandable to children at that stage.[11]

In the 'early-exit' transition models in USA, UK etc. English is often taught as a second language till children attain some proficiency in it. Then the children are transferred to mainstream 'English-only' classroom. English is also taught in English as second language 'pull-out' classes. The development of the child's first language is limited to the first one or two grades only. Here there is no strategy that builds upon the child's knowledge of the first language to help in the transition to the second language. The second language is taught separately.

First language component bridging approach (FLC-BP):[12] This has been tried out in a small experiment in a district of Philippines. It is based on the principle that teaching should proceed from the known to the unknown and is designed to build a bridge between the children's first language and Filipino (which is the medium of instruction). Literacy is first introduced in the child's first language. Reading readiness and reading instructional materials are used in the first language. A sixty-minute period is devoted to teaching and learning in the first language. During this period all concepts and skills are introduced in the first language. All concepts and skills are then bridged to Filipino and English during the remaining periods for those subjects. The school day schedule of the FLC-BP is different only in that a First Language Class is added to the schedule. The FLC-BP is designed to cover the first two grades in school. By the third grade, the bridging programme has been completed and the students follow the regular school curriculum. Two kinds of bridging approaches are followed here, by using specific teaching learning materials:

i. *Implicit bridging:* Trilingual lessons and stories are developed in the 3 languages, viz. first language, Filipino and English. A lesson or story is first taught in the first language class, then the same lesson or story is taught in the Filipino in the Filipino class and finally in English in the English class. Since the content is the same, there is implicit comprehension and reinforcement.

ii. *Explicit bridging:* This is done by the teacher when she points out the differences in concepts, vocabulary and

grammatical structure in the 3 languages. This is required more for English than Filipino.

Language decoding skills, i.e. recognizing sounds, symbols, symbol combinations, are easily transferred to the second language (Filipino) since there are many common sounds and symbols. Since the English orthography (script) is different, more time is taken to bridge to decoding skills in English. Initial concepts and thinking process is achieved in the first language. The child is encouraged to keep these concepts and names for the concepts stable in his mind in the first language and learn to attach the names to the concepts for the other languages. Even in grades 1 and 2 the regular curriculum materials are used in addition to the FLC-BP instructional materials.

For the Indian context, a variety of strategies would need to be adopted to address the learning problems faced by children who are presently studying through a language that they cannot understand or understand to a very limited extent. *In situations where the children's first language is very different from the standard language used at school and where there is little exposure of the children to the standard language outside school (also, the school/classroom has children of only one first language background), the following systematic approach for transition from the first to the second language seems to be appropriate.* This has been advocated by Dr. Susan Malone, an international educator with experience in planning multilingual education programs in Papua New Guinea, West Africa and Asia, in situations similar to the diverse socio-linguistic situation in India.[13]

Appropriate sequencing for bridging between L1 and L2:

- Develop confidence and competence in using L1 orally
- Begin reading and writing in L1
- Begin learning to speak and understand L2
- Build fluency in reading and writing in L1
- Build fluency in oral L2 while using L1 as medium of instruction (MoI)

- Bridge to reading and writing in L2, continue using L1 as MoI
- Use both L1 and L2 as MoI
- Shift to L2 as MoI

An effective transition would require the use of appropriate materials at all stages:

- Graded reading materials in the children's L1
- A Transition Primer that helps to teach the difference between the writing systems of L1 and L2
- Diglot stories and posters (the same story in the two languages, L1 and L2)
- Graded reading materials in L2

Interactive language teaching activities, that are meaningful and interesting, should be used at every step, both for L1 and L2.

Table 5.3 : Bridging strategy

Pre school Stage 1	Grade 1 and 2 Stage 2	Grade 3 Stage 3	Grade 4/5 Stage 4	Grade 5/6 Stage 5
Build oral fluency in L1	Build oral and written fluency in L1	Continue L1 skills development	L1 as subject	L1 continues as subject
Oral work in pre-numeracy, numeracy and	Begin oral work in L2	Bridge to literacy in L2 (reading and writing)	L2 as subject	L2 used as medium of instruction for all subjects
general awareness in L1	L1 used as medium of instruction for math, EVS	All subjects in L1	L1 and L2 used as medium of instruction for different subjects or both in structured manner for the same subjects	
			Oral L3	

This elaborate transition strategy would be appropriate for the socio-linguistic situation mentioned above. We will discuss other possible methods of arranging for bridging to the standard language for different socio-linguistic situations in India in Chapter 7.

For ensuring successful transition to the second language, the most crucial factor is the ability of the teacher to use appropriate classroom teaching methods for second language acquisition. Any strategy is likely to fail if teacher preparation has not been intensive. It is also necessary to ensure that classroom transaction takes place in accordance with the strategy that has been conceptualized. A large number of bilingual programmes all over the world are not doing well because several components of the comprehensive educational strategy do not get implemented in the classroom situation. In fact, some evaluations of local language instruction programmes across the world have shown that often the policy or strategy is not being implemented at all. For example, in Ghana it was discovered that the official policy of using the local language in the first three years of primary school was actually not being implemented because of lack of knowledge within the education system, lack of parental and teacher acceptance and lack of materials.[11]

5.7 MAJOR STEPS IN INITIATING A FIRST LANGUAGE PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGES THAT ARE NOT WRITTEN.

This section merely provides a bird's eye view of the intensive preparatory work that is required when a language that is unwritten, or never used for educational purpose, is selected as the medium of instruction.[15] These do not include the crucial processes relating to teacher recruitment and training.

Understanding how the language works: This will require linguists to work with native speakers of the chosen language to learn and analyse the language, including its system of meaningful sounds, meaningful word parts and rules for combining words.

Choice of writing system or Orthography: As far as possible, the script used for the first language should be the same as the script for the second language that the child would learn after a few grades. Learning different alphabets and writing systems for the first and second language (and a third script for English which is now initiated from grade 3 in most states), places a huge burden on the child and detracts from the real task of learning a new language effectively. The sound systems of some languages cannot be expressed easily in some other languages. However, linguists can work out methods to represent the specific sounds of any language in any other script. Also, decisions need to be taken on how the language will be codified, i.e. how would all the sounds of the language be represented by alphabets or syllables. How would the spellings be based on the pronunciation etc.

Standardisation: Most languages have more than one dialect, some quite different from the other. In India, a tribal language spoken in one part of the country may have significant differences with the language spoken in another region on account of the influence of the regional language.

The challenge of standardization is to develop a written form that resolves some of the dialect differences and is generally acceptable to a majority of the language speakers. This is a difficult task and could get bogged down in ideological and cultural conflicts. It is best done by intensive involvement of the representatives of the community, their cultural associations from the beginning.

Language Elaboration or Development: It involves creation of a wider vocabulary for use in education. This can be done by coining new words, adding new words, expanding the meaning of old words or borrowing words from other languages. While this is a natural process for all languages, for systematic use in education, this is best done through a process of planned vocabulary development. For the initial grades of primary education, this process need not be very extensive and can be done by a small committee of subject experts, linguists and local teachers. Any representative organization of the language group should also be involved.

This process of language elaboration would be a continuing process that takes in to account the feedback from the classrooms, teachers and the community.

Development of Curriculum and materials: Following the language elaboration process is the stage of development of instructional materials. In many bilingual programmes, the initial materials are usually translations of the textbooks in the dominant language. In some programmes like the Papua New Guinea and Gautemala, locally relevant materials based on the local culture and knowledge were developed through a long painstaking process. In such programmes, local teachers and villagers collaborate with linguists and curriculum developers to develop materials for the early grades.

To teach in a language that has not been used earlier as a medium of instruction would require teachers who are native speakers of this language and are also proficient in the second language to which bridging is to take place. Also, an intensive process of teacher training would need to be undertaken.

NOTES

1. The language used should be of a (difficulty) level that is understood by the learners and use must be made of strategies that allow learners to guess the message. A conversational orientation is usually helpful in making the initial L2 learner acquire the language. Use is also made of techniques of repetition, redundancy, getting feedback and crosschecking comprehension etc. to make sure that the message is understood. Teachers need to be trained specially to use an unfamiliar language for content instruction.

   More importantly, the content has to be adjusted to ensure that it is appropriate to the linguistic levels of learners. Thus, some concepts and content areas may have to be delayed or dealt with differently in the textbooks prepared for L2 bilingual immersion programmes. The materials used for students who are native speakers of the language of instruction would need to be substantially modified to make them appropriate for children for whom it is a second language. Ideally, the teacher should be bilingual or he/she should, at least, have a working knowledge of the children's first language.

2. In most European countries, the presence of culturally and linguistically diverse communities is seen as a problem and often as a threat to the

identity of the mainstream society. The stress of educational policies is, therefore, on assimilation of these groups into the mainstream. The educational programmes discourage the use of the children's first languages. The focus is on early transition to the majority language of the region or country.

3. This was seen happening in the Bamunghopa LP school in Goalpara district of Assam and the Elkapar EGS school in Madkasur village in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh (during the fieldwork).

4. See Jim Cummins, 'SLA within Bilingual Education Programs,' in *Issues in Second Language Acquisition: Multiple Perspectives,* ed. Leslie M. Beebe (New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1987) 161-162, for an analysis of monolingual and bilingual programmes based on the three indicators of 'comprehensible input', viz. bilingual teacher, L2 modified input and L1 literacy promotion.

5. In India, the primary stage varies between four to five years, for most children, as the coverage of pre-school education is very low.

6. These observations are based on the analyses of:

   (i) Nadine Dutcher, in collaboration with G.R. Tucker, 'The Use of First and Second Language in Education: A Review of International Experience,' World Bank Staff Working Paper, 1994, 6-44;
   (ii) Jim Cummins, 'Second Language Acquisition within bilingual education programmes', in *Issues in Second language Acquisition,,* ed. Leslie M. Beebe (USA: Newbury House Publishers, 1987) ; and
   (iii) W. P. Thomas and V. Collier, *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students* (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1997).

7. Nadine Dutcher, 'The Use of First and Second Languages in Primary Education: Selected Case Studies,' World Bank Staff Working Paper, The World Bank, 1982, 40-43.

8. This overview has been compiled on the basis of material contained in Cummins (1987), Dutcher (1994) and other sources.

9. For more details on the Papua New Guinea Programme, see the following:

   (i) Don Archibald, 'Elementary Education Reform in Papua New Guinea' a UNESCO Report, 1996.
   (ii) Nadine Dutcher, *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies (2nd ed.)* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004) (Also available at *www.cal.org* <http://www.cal.org>); and

(iii) Robert Litteral, 'Four Decades of Language Policy In Papua New Guinea,' a paper originally presented to the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea, 1995 (Available at www.sil.org/silewp/1999).

10. This is based on an overview of the HCEP prepared by CARE International in Combodia.

11. We have already explained that in the Indian context, such an approach may not be suitable and second language learning should reach an appropriate stage before the language is used as a medium of instruction

12. Based on Lou Hohulin, 'The First Language Component: A Bridging educational programme,' working paper, Summer Institute of Linguistics Inc. 1995.

13. This section is based entirely on Susan Malone, 'Education for multilingualism and multiliteracy in minority language communities: The situation in Asia,' paper presented at the Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and multilingual education in Asia, November 2003, Bangkok and her e-mail communication with the author. Dr. Malone has further allowed the reproduction of the following elaboration on the transition strategy:

Begin learning to read and write the children's L1. If the minority language communities lack instructional materials for teaching the L1, they will need to develop these. In Papua New Guinea, the National Department of Education prepared Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) which teachers from the different language groups could use to develop their lesson plans, using locally familiar content. The ILOs help to ensure that children from different language communities develop the same competencies at approximately the same time. Teachers will also need an adequate supply of graded reading materials in the L1. These materials should be in the children's L1 and should be about people, places and activities that are familiar to them and that affirm their cultural heritage. At "Writers' Workshops" around the world, L1 speakers of previously un-written languages have developed graded readers, Big Books, posters and letter/word cards for use at this stage of their education program.

Begin learning to speak and understand the L2. Ideally, children should have a full year in the L1 but since, in most situations, there is a sense of urgency to start learning the dominant language, many programs introduce oral L2 in the second half of the first year. Until recently, there were very few materials to help teachers teach oral L2 in a meaningful way. "TPR" or Total Physical Response, developed by

James Asher (*tprworld@aol.com* <*mailto:tprworld@aol.com*>), is a method that teachers can easily adapt to their local context. TPR begins by giving spoken commands in the L2; the children watch the teacher and two student volunteers respond appropriately to the commands. The children then respond to the commands but they are not expected to speak in the L2 until later when they themselves issue the commands. The progression of terms/commands could possibly be developed centrally and adapted, as needed, so the terms are relevant and appropriate for individual language groups.

Build fluency in reading and writing the L1. At this stage, teachers can introduce L1 reading materials that are longer and a bit more complex. In addition to locally created stories, L1 speakers can translate materials, created outside the language area, into their L1. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) SIL International, working with the National Department of Education, pioneered the use of "Shell Books". These are stories written in a common language using desk-top publishing software. L1 speakers translate the L2 text into their own language. The translated text is then inserted into the "text box" on the software program and the stories are printed, photocopied, tested, revised as needed, and produced in larger quantities for classroom use.

Build fluency in oral L2. Now the teacher can introduce activities that encourage the children to use the L2 in meaningful ways. For example, after the teacher tells a story in the L2, the children act out the story using their own words. Then the children tell their own story and act it out. Also at this point, teachers may be able to use the L2 for some content teaching but will most likely have to use the L1 to help explain new concepts.

Bridge to reading and writing the L2. Teachers will need a transition primer and plenty of diglot reading materials (text in the L1 and the L2) to help the children bridge from L1 to L2 literacy. As above, the teachers will require specialized training and plenty of time to practice activities that are suitable for this stage of the program.

Materials required for building a "strong bridge" between the L1 and the L2:

- **Graded reading materials in the children's L1**
- **Transition primer that teaches the difference between the L1 and L2 writing systems.** If both languages use the same symbols, the primer starts by teaching the symbols that look and sound the same in both languages, then new symbols used in the L2 but not the L1 and finally the symbols found in both languages that that look the same but have different sounds

- **Diglot stories and posters** (the L1 text above the illustration and the L2 text below.) Shell materials, described above, can easily be used to create materials in two languages.
- **Graded reading materials in the L2**.

14. A USAID Report of 2000 quoted in Nadine Dutcher, *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies.*

15. This section is based entirely on the following:

(i) Nadine Dutcher, *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies (2nd ed.)* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004) (Also available at *www.cal.org* <http://www.cal.org>) 17-22;

(ii) UNESCO, *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 1953) 60- 67;

(iii) Susan Malone, 'Education for multilingualism and multiliteracy in minority language communities: The situation in Asia.'
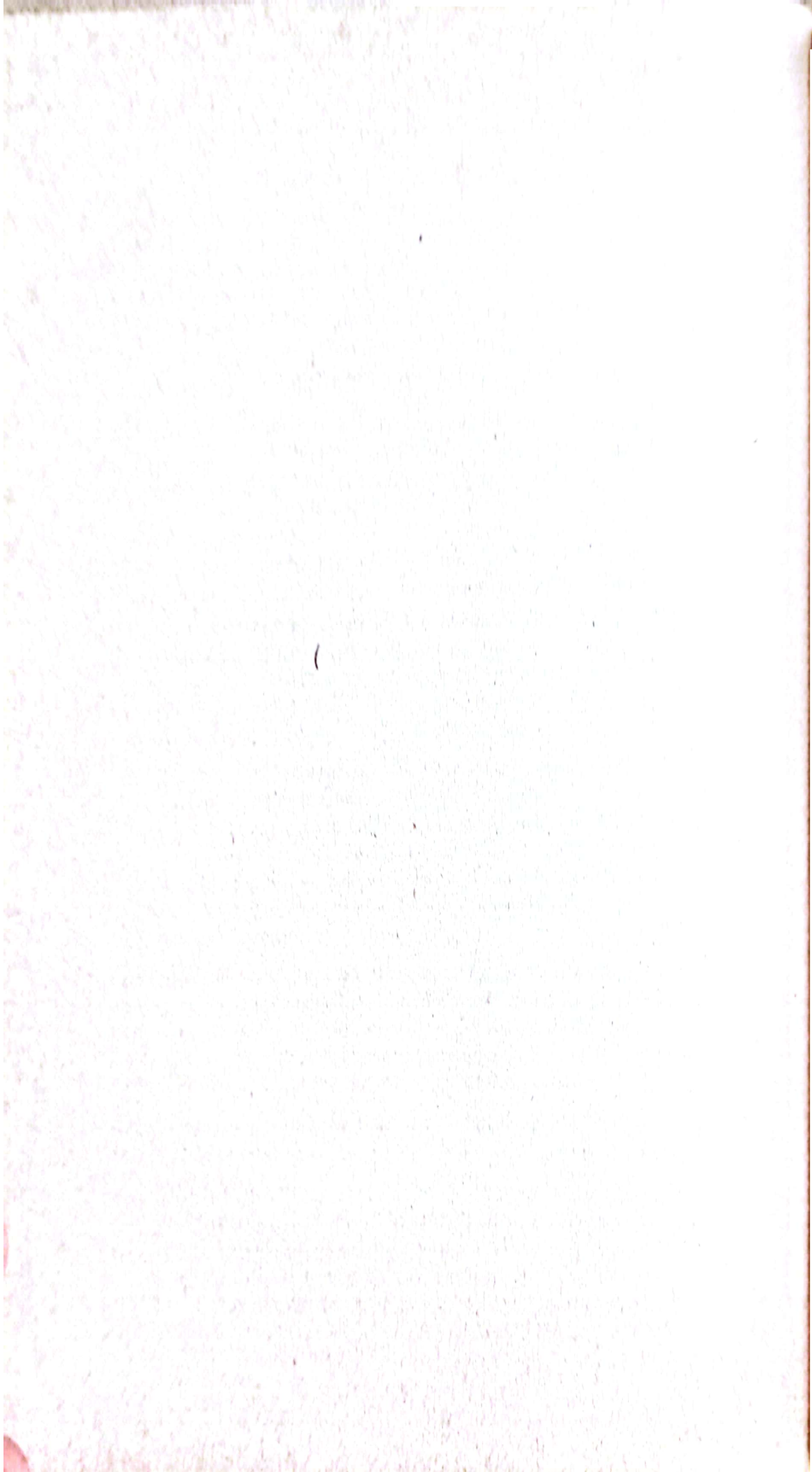
ATTITUDES AND INITIATIVES— THE INDIAN SITUATION

During the past few months, the research team interacted with education personnel of several states including Assam, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka. The responses of representatives of the education department, SCERT, DIET and district/block level education officers were almost similar and can be summarised as follows:

i. The language problem is not very serious in our state. There are several dialects spoken by a large number of people, but these are very similar to the official language.[1] In most areas, the people can also speak the regional language. It is only in some remote tribal pockets that people do not speak or understand the regional language fully.

ii. The tribal 'dialects' do not have a script and literature and are not standardized.[2] Therefore, they cannot be used as medium of instruction or be taught as a subject.

iii. The parents and community leaders are totally against their children being taught in the tribal language since they fear that their children would not become proficient in the regional language. This would increase their disadvantage compared to mainstream regional language speaking children.

iv. For migrants and minority language speakers, whose language is an official language and a medium of instruction in another (often adjoining) state, the argument given is that it is better that their children learn the regional language to help them get assimilated into the socio-linguistic setting of

the majority society and also become eligible for employment in the state.

v. On the delays in preparation of textbooks in minority languages used as medium of instruction (e.g. Marathi in Madhya Pradesh, Bodo in Assam, Telugu in Orissa etc.), most state level officials and academic faculty at SCERTs explained that they were overburdened with the workload of revision of curriculum, development, printing and distribution of textbooks in the main language and therefore, the work of revision and publication of textbooks in the minority languages was often delayed. The same 'workload' explanation was provided by state level education administrators and academic personnel for not organising training programmes for teachers in minority languages.

vi. Some state and district level education personnel also felt strongly that there was little commitment towards education in tribal areas due to poverty and the traditional unfrettered way of life. In such areas, language was not the major issue but the attitude of the parents and the low value attached to schooling of their children was more of a problem.

In almost every state, textbooks in minority languages (e.g. Bodo and Bengali in Assam, Urdu in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, Marathi in Madhya Pradesh etc.) are not made available to schools in time for the academic session. Also, these books have not undergone an intensive revision process to revise content and to make them activity-based and child-centered, like the textbooks of the main language of the state. In-service training for teachers of these 'non-state language' medium schools have either not been held or these teachers have attended training programmes conducted in the main state language, which is of little use to them.

6.1 INITIATIVES FOR HELPING CHILDREN STUDYING THROUGH A SECOND LANGUAGE

We undertook a limited review of the major initiatives taken in the past decade (and some that were implemented earlier) in some states to address the problems faced by children

who speak a first language at the stage of entry to school that is not a medium of instruction in a particular state. In the states of Assam, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, these initiatives and the assumptions or pedagogical perspectives behind them were also discussed at length with state and district level academic resource persons. Some of these initiatives are summarized below:

The Tribal Language Primer Programme

The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Central Institute for Indian Languages (CIIL) and the Tribal Research Institutes (TRI) in various states (along with some other state level academic institutions) were involved in a major effort for introducing primers in several tribal languages for the initial primary grades. Some of the languages in which primers were prepared and published included Bhili, Gondi, Halbi, Koya, Kui, Saora and Santali. The language primers were based on a 'language-transfer' model. Thus, the grade 1 primer was almost entirely in the tribal language and in the following grades, the proportion of the tribal language text was reduced, till the primers of grade 4 were prepared entirely in the main state language. These primers were introduced in selected schools in several states. Their use has been discontinued several years back. State level educationists, retired and working educational administrators, TRI faculty members and teachers, who were associated with the implementation of the programme indicated the following serious problems in the conceptualization and implementation that led to the limited success and discontinuance of this initiative:

i. Most of the primers were mere translations or adaptations from the textbooks in the regional/state language.
ii. The primers were prepared only for the subject of language and not for all subjects. Therefore, children had to continue to study other subjects in the second language and there was a complete mismatch between the second language

proficiency of the children and the language used in the subject textbooks at any point of time.

iii. The entire approach was very limited. The components of teacher training, regular academic follow-up and evaluation were almost non-existent. The preparation, publication and distribution of the primers was almost an end in itself, rather than just one step in a comprehensive initiative to ensure that the transition model takes root in the system.

iv. Many other major pre-requisites of such a programme had not been planned adequately. For example, not all the selected schools had 100 per cent tribal children with the same first language. All the teachers in such schools were not bilingual in the children's first language and the school language. There was little effort to involve the community in the initiative at any stage.

v. These efforts were not backed by any long-term policy of the state government on the 'language in education' issue. They were seen as mere pilot experiments with no commitment for scaling up.

vi. Also, the grounding in theoretical perspectives and second language acquisition methods was weak. The use of both languages in the same textbook without clear guidelines on a structured use of the two languages, or the approach for gradual transition to the second language, made the work of the teachers difficult. Anyway, since only the language book was provided, it was not possible for teachers to actually wait for children to acquire proficiency in the second language before using it as a medium of instruction, since the other subjects had to be taught in the second language.

These programmes were guided by a welfare orientation rather than a rights perspective. There has been no systematic evaluation of these pilot programmes to bring out the benefits, limitations and problems. There is no institutional memory about these initiatives. The unfortunate part is that some states planned similar initiatives in the late 1990s without being aware of the problems in implementation of the earlier primer introduction programmes.

Training of Teachers in Tribal Languages

Some states have also been implementing a programme for training of non-tribal teachers in tribal languages to ensure that the teacher is at least able to understand the children's language and also speak in that language to a limited extent. The success of these programmes has been extremely limited, as most non-tribal teachers did not pick up the tribal languages. Also, the training programmes had a narrow focus and the negative attitudes towards tribal children were not addressed. The problem of teachers' complete non-comprehension of the children's spoken language is somewhat reduced in magnitude now, since many tribal area schools now have at least one teacher who knows the children's tongue.

Initiatives under District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Andhra Pradesh

Bilingual materials for helping teachers

Andhra Pradesh DPEP developed bilingual materials for class 1 in six tribal languages (which were called dialects). These are basically translations of the class 1 language textbook 'Telugu Bharati', into these languages, viz. Savara, Kui, Banjara, Gond, Kolami and Adivasi Oriya. These materials were meant for the teachers to know the equivalent words in the tribal language, and use them with the children who do not know the Telugu words used in the textbook. This was prepared mainly for helping non-tribal teachers. Some alphabet cards and bilingual dictionaries were also developed in Savara language in Srikakulam district, and in Gondi language in Adilabad district. The use of these materials has remained very limited.

Multi-lingual Education Initiative

This is a recent initiative of the Department of Education of the Andhra Pradesh government in collaboration with the

Tribal Welfare Department. It is based on the basic assumptions of a transitional bilingual education programme. At present, primers for grade 1 have been prepared in eight tribal languages. These languages are, Gondi, Koya, Lambadi, Kolami, Savara, Kui, and Adivasi Oriya. These primers use the Telugu script for all the languages. Telugu would be gradually introduced into the curriculum from grade 3 or 4 onwards in a phased manner. English is proposed to be introduced as a subject in grade 5. Presently, the new strategy has been piloted in ten schools, in each of the eight tribal languages, i.e. a total of 80 primary schools. The schools that have been selected have 100 per cent tribal children and tribal language knowing teachers.

As a first step, a multi-disciplinary team, consisting of linguists, anthropologists and educationists, was constituted for each of the tribal languages. Linguists and experts with experience in developing such programmes in other countries, including representatives of SIL International, have provided extensive technical assistance to this initiative. Representatives from three Universities and the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute participated in these teams. These teams collected baseline information on these tribal languages and culture by involving tribal teachers and the local community. Apart from collecting equivalent words for one thousand bi and tri-syllabic words and five hundred simple sentences of the Telugu language, the teams also collected local stories, rhymes, riddles, and information on local flora, fauna, festivals, traditions, measurements etc. The curriculum has been designed by identifying themes for every week. Several additional materials like alphabet charts, cultural calendar, children's stories, activity books, teachers' guides are proposed. Certain supplementary materials like 'Big Books' for children are also planned. The SCERT has conducted training of the teachers and the curriculum has been introduced in the 2004-05 academic session.

In the months preceding the introduction of this strategy, meetings were held with parents and local community leaders

to convince them about the strategy and get their consent. The education department has indicated that there would be regular monitoring and concurrent evaluation with a view to incorporate changes on a continuing basis.

Assam

Socio-linguistic survey

The language issue was identified by DPEP Assam as the most important cause of low achievement of students in the western-most part of Assam. There is almost zero intelligibility between the local variant of Assamese (Goalpariya) and the standard version of Assamese used in the textbooks. The teachers, being local, freely use the Goalpariya language in the classroom to explain the content.

As a first step, a socio-linguistic survey was undertaken in three districts of Assam to document the language situation and the children's comprehension of the standard dialect of Assamese. Block-wise pictorial maps were prepared, indicating the languages spoken in each village. Following the survey, a very limited strategy of a handbook for teachers for class 1 had been planned, basically to help teachers become familiar with words used in the textbooks, since the teachers' proficiency in the standard dialect used in the textbook was inadequate. The entire effort was forgotten with the change in key members of the state project team.

Bridge language material for the tea-garden labour community children

There are about 1000 tea gardens in Assam. There is a very diverse language situation in these tea gardens areas. While some of the communities speak their original language, e.g. Oriya and Mundari, the largest number speaks a link language called Sadri, which has become the lingua franca among the tea garden labour population in several districts.

During 2002-03, cluster, block and district level academic personnel of SSA Assam, with the help of tea garden community

teachers prepared a bridge language primer which aims at initial 4-6 months instruction in the local language. Thus, initial skills of reading would be developed using Sadri words. During this period, the equivalent Assamese words would also be used to enable the child to use the textbook after a few months. This primer is also a workbook. The strategy also involves the use of local rhymes and folk tales in the first one or two months. This is a very limited strategy and does not focus at all on developing language skills in the Sadri language. Moreover, the attempt to bridge to the second language in a few months time is definitely inappropriate. However, the Assam team appeared satisfied that they had managed to reduce the children's trauma in the initial months of grade 1, who were earlier forced to listen to, and try and understand a totally unfamiliar language from the first day at school. The assumption that children in tea garden areas were proficient in the link language, Sadri also needs to be checked out through systematic socio-linguistic mapping.

Gujarat

Gujarat DPEP and SSA identified Kutchhi, Bhili and Dangi as languages distinct from Gujarati and recognized the need for some interventions to assist teachers in schools with children of these first languages. Some of the DIETs have developed teaching-learning materials (TLMs) in these languages, especially in the form of alphabet and word-cards and charts. During teacher training programmes in some districts, local community-based action songs and stories have been compiled as a resource for use in the classrooms. Some training programmes have been organized for teachers in Katchhi dialect for those teachers who are not native speakers of Kutch. Dictionaries have been developed in Bhili, Kutchhi and Dangi for standardizing local vocabulary. These efforts have been ad-hoc and piecemeal and have had little impact apart from encouraging the use of the local language in grade I to some extent.

The Gujarat Council of Educational Research and Training (GCERT) along with the Textbook Board developed bilingual language textbooks in 1999-2000 in Bhili and Gujarati for grades 1 to 4 with an 80:20 proportion of Bhili to Gujarati text in grade 1, followed by 60:40 in grade 2, 40:60 in grade 3 and 20:80 in grade 4. These were meant to be supplementary materials for teachers and students and not the main textbooks. The primers were sent to some schools, but had to be withdrawn due to public pressure and questions in the Legislative Assembly.

Madhya Pradesh

Some district education teams developed Bridge Language Inventories (BLIs) in Gondi, Bhili and Baigani. These booklets were prepared to help non-tribal teachers posted in tribal areas by providing a compilation of common words and sentences in the local language along with their meaning in Hindi. Some BLIs also included folk tales, rhymes and songs. This work was discontinued when the state adopted a policy of recruiting more local-tribal teachers. This was a very limited effort in just three districts. The language issue has remained largely unaddressed.

Jharkhand

The Tribal Research Institute at Ranchi in collaboration with the Ranchi University has developed textbooks in five tribal languages, viz. Oraon, Santali, Kuruk, Ho and Mundari. While the Devanagri script has been used for the languages of Kharia and Mundari, the old, traditional scripts have been used for Oraon, Santali and Ho . The books could not be published since the government has not agreed to their introduction. There is also, reportedly, a fear of opposition from tribal groups on this issue.

Clearly, this effort is half-baked. Systematic socio-linguistic mapping has not been undertaken to identify areas where these languages are spoken as first languages. There was no effort to get the community's consent on teaching through the local language. Also, the other activities of teacher preparation and academic follow up had not been planned. The use of traditional

scripts that are not known even to tribal teachers may be inappropriate. The transition to Hindi would mean a shift to an entirely different script in the later grades.

Karnataka

Karnataka DPEP developed textbooks in Soliga language for grades 1 to 3. The process of textbook development was very participative and the material is based mainly on the culture of the Soliga tribals. The textbook for grade 1 contains 75 per cent Soliga words and the remaining are Kannada words. This proportion reduces to 50:50 in grade 2 followed by 25:75 for grade 3. From grade 4 onwards the normal Kannada curriculum is implemented. These books were introduced in 16 *Ashram* (residential) schools in 1999-2000. The textbook for grade 3 that should have been introduced in 2001-02 was delayed by two years and was introduced only in 2004-05. There was inadequate training of the teachers and cluster and block level resource persons on the use of these books and on the approach to transition from the first to the second language. No systematic evaluation of the impact of the programme has been carried out. There is no documentation of classroom observations and children's achievement levels to draw any conclusions about the experiment. For this study, a quick survey was carried out that revealed a lack of support from the teachers and parents of children in the government run *Ashram* schools. Some schools had a mixed first language situation of the children. The Lambadi children did not like to study in Soliga.

Orissa

The Introduction of Saora language Primer

Saora primers had been produced by SCERT, Orissa in the early 1980s for grades 1 and 2. NCERT had also initiated another experiment in preparation and introduction of Saora primers for grades 1 and 2 with a 'bilingual transfer' approach. However, these primers were discontinued owing to the opposition from political leaders and the absence of any strategy

for teacher training and follow up. Some of these primers continued to be distributed as supplementary readers to the Ashram schools.

Under DPEP, a new exercise was undertaken for preparation of a Saora primer for grade 1 based on the experience and cultural environment of Saora children. The preparation of the primer was a very participatory and experiential exercise, involving a large number of tribal and non-tribal teachers. Intensive workshops were organized with teachers to help them imbibe the concept of a child-centred, culturally appropriate curriculum for tribal children. Linguists and anthropologists from Orissa and outside were involved in the initial workshop and in the review of the draft primer. The primer was also field trialled in some schools. Meanwhile, the Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture (ATDC) had undertaken a linguistic survey and mapping in selected blocks of four districts with a concentration of tribal population. This provided a database for identifying areas where tribal language-Oriya bilingual primers need to be introduced. The attitudinal training of teachers working in tribal areas helped in providing a favourable environment for introduction of the new primers. The Saora primer was introduced in Gajapati and Rayagada districts in schools where there were 100 per cent Saora speaking children. In schools where the number of tribal children was between 80-100 per cent, the Saora primer was introduced as a supplementary reader. Training was imparted to the block and cluster level resource persons on the use of the Saora primer in classrooms. In addition to the Saora primer for grade 1, a teachers' handbook, conversational chart, a picture dictionary and a collection of folk tales was also prepared for the teachers.

In the initial stages, the intervention for promoting education of tribal children was comprehensive and well-conceptualised. It included the conduct of linguistic survey and mapping; training of teachers on the aspect of attitude towards tribal children; training of tribal and non-tribal teachers on the use of bilingual primers; preparation of teaching-learning materials rooted in the local cultural contexts of tribal children; and

preparation of resource persons at cluster and block levels for regular follow up and academic support to teachers.

Following the introduction of the grade 1 Saora primer in 1999-2000, primers were prepared in six other tribal languages, viz. Koya, Bonda, Kui, Juang and Kuvi. These primers were distributed without the training of teachers. The representatives of the tribal groups and local community leaders were not consulted on the introduction of the new primers. These primers were sent to all the schools in tribal areas without ascertaining the proportion of tribal children in these schools. The teachers were advised to use these primers as supplementary material for tribal children. The grade 2 Saora primer was never prepared. An earlier experiment introducing Santali medium textbooks in 'Ol-chiki' script in 30 schools had also failed due to faulty planning and lack of follow up.

Attitudinal training

This was an integral part of the strategy for improving the quality of education in tribal areas. The DPEP team in Orissa identified the lack of motivation and negative attitude of teachers towards tribal children and their culture and language to be a major reason behind the low participation and achievement levels of tribal children. Through a series of experiential workshops with teachers, a training module was evolved which focused on issues like understanding the strengths and weaknesses; likes and dislikes of tribal children; the cultural environment in tribal areas and the possibility of using children's experiences in the early grades of education; the disadvantages that tribal children face on account of being forced to learn in an unfamiliar language; basic principles of children's learning; and the need to respect ethnic and cultural diversity and question stereotypes. During 1997-99 about 20,000 teachers in tribal blocks were oriented on these issues. In addition, cluster and block level coordinators were also trained to follow up on the initial attitudinal training and sustain the climate for change. Through these training programmes, there was a perceptible sensitization of teachers. This intervention also questioned the

complete exclusion of the tribal culture and environment from the uniform state textbooks and the statewide uniform training programmes for teachers that did not address the basic issues that afflict primary education in tribal areas. However, this remained a one-time activity that was not sustained owing to the indifference of the state level management of the DPEP.

Joyful Learning Programme in Several States

The 'joyful learning movement' had taken strong roots in several states, e.g. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, before DPEP was initiated. This was also synthesized with the MLL (Minimum Levels of Learning) approach and the activity orientation promoted under DPEP. The main positive outcome of the 'joyful learning' approach has been that many teachers in these states use a variety of joyful (singing, playing) activities in grade 1. In a small proportion of schools in tribal areas, teachers also use local folk tales and 'action-songs' in the local language in the first few months in grade 1. These are largely add-on activities and the curriculum is transacted in the traditional manner, mainly in the standard language. While there is no planned promotion of the children's first language, and therefore no real academic benefit, this approach helps in creating a warm, non-threatening environment for children who otherwise have to face a completely unfamiliar language at school.

Introduction of Children's First Languages as Additional Subjects: Language Development

Some work of language development has taken place in a few tribal languages at the time of development of primers. However, much of this work has not been systematic. Some hitherto unwritten languages have been introduced as subjects in grades 3 to 5 to appease demands from some minority socio-linguistic communities. For example, in Assam, the Tai, Karbi and Mising languages are taught as subjects at the primary level. This is a half-hearted measure with unclear pedagogical objectives. Often, the schools where the new language subject has been introduced do not have teachers who are native speakers of the language.

6.2 DID THESE INITIATIVES WORK?

A few other states developed bilingual charts and word-cards showing equivalent words in the local and standard language. Many of these materials were actually meant for guidance of the teachers. While in-service teacher training was greatly intensified in the past decade, the aspects of 'principles of second language acquisition' and appropriate language teaching methods for children studying through a second language were not included at all. The large number of academic resource persons deployed under DPEP and SSA at the district, block and cluster level have not studied this issue seriously. Thus, while classroom observations and school visits are undertaken regularly by these resource persons, these could not throw up a voluble demand to address the problem of children not understanding the language being used at school as a serious quality issue. Probably, attitudes towards such social and linguistic groups may have played a role in the serious undermining of this important quality issue.

As described earlier, these approaches, with the exception of the present effort in Andhra Pradesh and the initial work done in Orissa, were not comprehensive at all. The people associated did not have a clear conceptual understanding of the research findings in language learning, nor any idea about the comprehensive educational strategies that have been tried out in other countries. In most cases, the interventions were of a tokenistic nature, e.g. introduction of alphabet and word-cards or bilingual dictionaries for the teachers.[1] Teacher preparation was a weak link, except in the first year of the introduction of Saora Primers in Orissa. Wherever primers in the children's first language have been developed and introduced, there is no clarity regarding the process through which a transition to the second language is to be achieved in the classroom. Thus, in most states such materials are being dumped in schools for use as *supplementary materials*. When teachers complain about their inability to 'cover' the main textbooks, how are they expected to transact these supplementary materials in addition? Also, the suggestion that these primers

be used as supplementary materials makes a mockery of the whole approach of gradually leading a second language learner from a familiar language to an unfamiliar language. Such half-hearted, unsound and tokenistic efforts that have wasted huge amounts of public funds should be roundly condemned. Probably, it is the lack of accountability in our system that has allowed such interventions to be started and sustained. Fortunately, many of them died a natural death because they proved to be unusable in schools and had little impact on the children's learning of the second language.

Several small initiatives were discontinued or distorted when key personnel got shifted away from key programme positions. When such personnel changes take place, innovative programmes are the first to be questioned and denied the support required to nurture them. Since most of the interventions to help children studying through a second language do not have an explicit policy or statutory framework backing them, they tend to wither away with a change in the team or leadership at the state level. Also, with a very incomplete understanding of the processes involved and the intensity of the effort required, policy makers and educational administrators mistake one major discrete activity like primer preparation and printing to be *the* entire educational strategy. The process in Andhra Pradesh, at the initial stage has been intensive, participatory and community oriented. But it needs to be understood that all the processes of capacity building, mobilization of the community and their representative organizations, teacher preparation, orientation of academic and administrative personnel, regular evaluation of children and programme implementation, collection of feedback on materials and class room teaching methods, standardization of vocabulary and language usage in the unwritten languages, work on ensuring a good transition or bridging to the second language, would need to be intensively supported in a sustained manner over a long period of time with funds, attention of senior academic and administrative personnel, and policy backing.

Assam different, but not quite

Assam has three separate official languages for three parts of the state. While Assamese is the official language in the Brahmaputra valley, Bengali is the official language for the 3 Southern Assam districts. Bengali is also the medium of instruction in schools in these districts. Bodo, a language of the Bodo scheduled tribe is the third official language of the state for identified districts. Eight languages are used as mediums of instruction at the primary level. Assam is the only state in the country where three 'tribal languages' are used as mediums of instruction at the primary level. These languages are Bodo, Garo and Hmar. The Bodo language has recently been included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In most other states, primary stage textbooks are published in just three or four languages.

In addition, at least six other minority languages, (Mising, Rabha, Tiwa, Tai, Nepali and Karbi) are being taught as subjects at the primary stage. For the past few years, revision of textbooks in the minority languages has been taken up in the right earnest. Teacher training programmes are usually held in at least 3 languages, viz. Assamese, Bodo and Bengali.

Despite an apparently liberal 'language in education' policy, the actual implementation has been very *ad hoc*. The primary school curriculum document does not recognize or address the issue of language diversity and its implications for materials or teaching strategies. The processes of curriculum and textbook revision, teacher training and academic support have been neglected in these 'minor' languages. There is a big time lag in the revision of textbooks in these languages, and often teacher training programmes are not organized for teachers who teach in these mediums.

The problem of non-availability of middle schools in Garo, Hmar and Manipuri mediums has not been addressed. There is no clear strategy to help children studying in these mediums at the primary level to adjust to the majority language (Assamese/Bengali) medium from grade 5 onwards. The development of Assamese language (which is taught only as a subject) by grade 4 in these schools is definitely inadequate for children to be able to cope with the curriculum at the upper primary level in Assamese medium.

NOTES

1. In almost all states, the administrative as well as academic personnel in institutions like SCERT named any language that is not usually written as a dialect.

2. Several education department personnel told the author that Soliga is a dialect (where inferior words are used instead of pure Kannada words) of Kannada and that 95 per cent of the words in Soliga are Kannada words. Similarly, education officials in West Bengal were insistent that the Rajbonshi language is almost similar to Bengali with minor variations of accent etc.
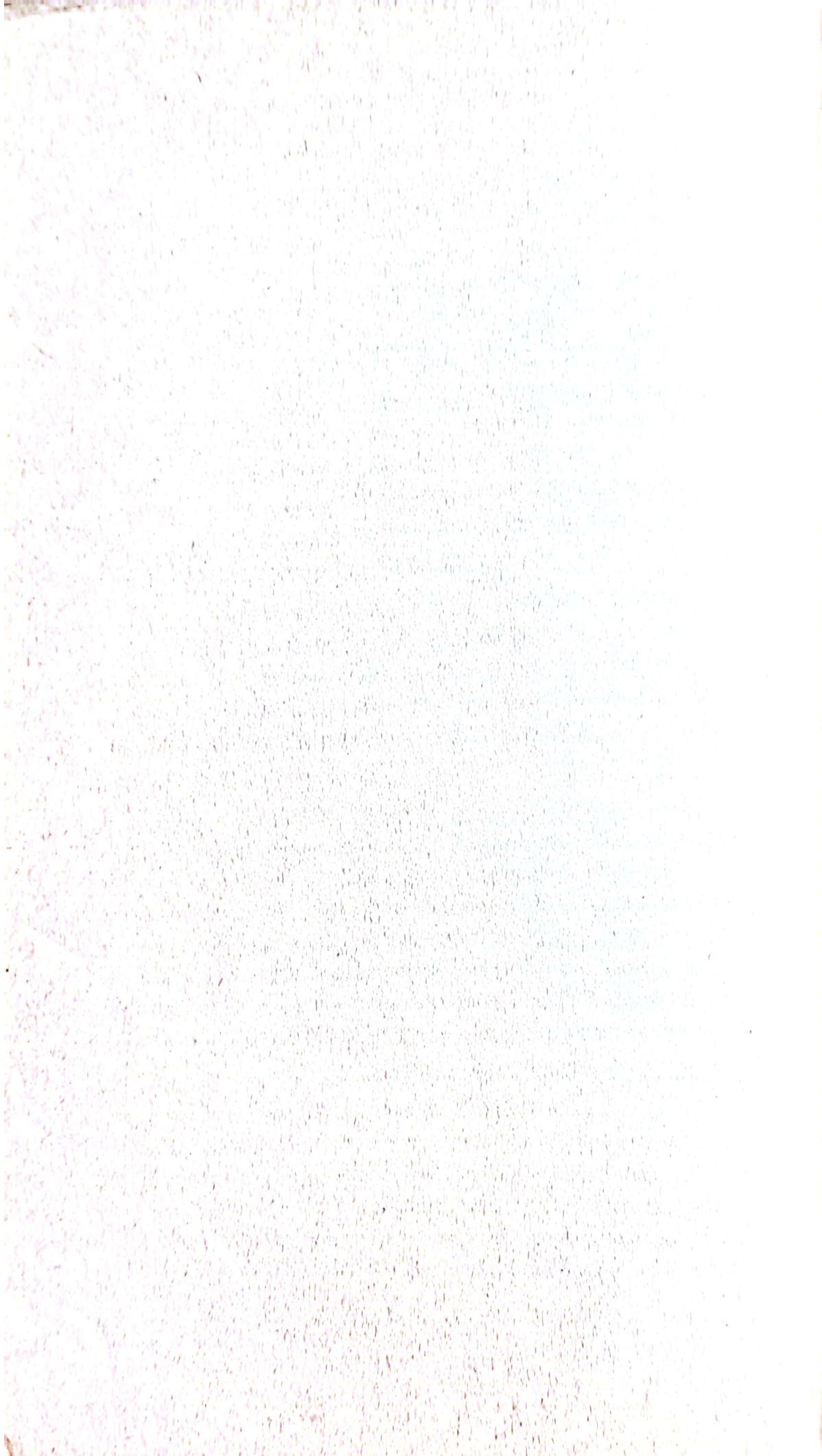
APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES— IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The methodology followed in almost all government schools in our country is one of *monolingual submersion* - teaching through an unfamiliar, second language from the first day at school, with no effort to make the input comprehensible to children who come from a different language background. There is also no effort to develop the children's first language. This is definitely the most inappropriate methodology for such situations. Based on the review of theoretical perspectives and research findings, including the evaluation of various programmes across the world for language minority children, we can safely conclude that the ideal strategy, from the point of view of the child's social, affective and cognitive development, would be instruction in the first language till as late a stage as possible. However, if this is not possible, or acceptable, for certain reasons, the education policy should support *late-exit transitional bilingual programmes* which provide initial instruction in L1 followed by use of both L1 and L2 for instruction till the end of the primary stage.[1] Certain practical considerations may constrain the implementation of these most appropriate language policies and programmes. In this chapter, we would identify

some of these *real, practical* constraints and discuss alternative 'compromise' solutions that could be implemented to suit different situations and constraints. The initial steps in the planning and implementation of such programmes and the need for a sustained commitment from the political leadership and educational bureaucracy would also be discussed.

7.1 NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

We would consider the following *four* ingredients as '*non-negotiable*' in any education programme, especially in situations where the children's first language is very different from the school language (and not merely a variant of the standard language/dialect); the first language has low social prestige; the community has a low rate of literacy and limited exposure to the standard language.

i.   Development of the children's first language should be promoted.
ii. Textual materials and classroom transaction in the second language should be in a form that is comprehensible to the children at every stage.
iii. Teachers should be bilingual, i.e. have fluency in the children's first language as well as the language that is being used as medium of instruction in the later stages.
iv. Use of appropriate first and second language teaching methods.

It has been stressed earlier, that the fourth non-negotiable listed above applies to all school situations. Appropriate language teaching methods are crucial even in schools where children are learning through a language that is very similar to their first language.

7.2 FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR FRAMING EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

We have seen earlier (Chapters 1 and 2) that the language situations in schools are very diverse in various parts of the

country, as well as within a state, or even a district. Therefore, a range of approaches would be necessary to address the needs of children who are presently studying in a language that is different from their first language. Some of the factors that could help define the nature of strategies to be used are:

i. *The distance of the children's first language from the school language.* If the language used at school is very different from the children's language (it may belong to a different stock altogether), the task of learning the new language is more difficult. For example, most tribal languages are Austro-Asiatic or Tibeto-Burman in origin, while the languages used at school are of Indo-Aryan or Dravidian stock. There are other languages or dialects that may be somewhat similar to the school language, though the initial intelligibility of the school language to a five year old, who has just joined school, may be low.

ii. *The status of the child's home language in society*: If the society and the parents accord low prestige to their home language, they would not be keen to allow use of that language as a medium of instruction, even for the first few grades. Even if certain languages or dialects are used extensively at home and outside, and enjoy social prestige, there may be a strong feeling that children should learn in the standard dialect. This would be the case with dialects of the major regional languages. In plural language situations where a lingua franca or pidgin has emerged for communication between different socio-linguistic groups, like Desia in Orissa, Sadri in Assam and Orissa, or Nagamese in Nagaland, the popular opinion is generally against their use in education.

iii. *The motivation of the children, parents and society for the learning of second language.* Where there is a positive attitude and a strong motivation to learn the school/ standard language, the children would be able to pick up the language more quickly. There may also be opposition for use of the first language as a medium of instruction in this situation.

iv. *The socio-economic, especially the literacy status of the social group and the exposure to the standard language.* High literacy rates in the area and within the household, employment in government or other formal jobs, and exposure to radio, TV and print material result in greater home support and pressure on children to pick up the standard language. In more isolated areas, with lower literacy levels and limited exposure to the standard language, the shift to the standard language is more difficult.

v. *Multilingual or mixed language background situations at school.* It is difficult to devise educational strategies for situations where children in a classroom or school belong to two, three or more first language groups. While some experimental work has been done in such situations and certain desirable classroom teaching strategies are suggested, there is not enough experience of scaled-up education programmes in the world for such situations. The two-way developmental model discussed in Chapter 5 that has been used in a situation where there are almost an equal number of English and Spanish-speaking children may not work in our situations, because at least one of the languages in the multi-lingual classroom is likely to have a low social prestige. Parents belonging to the dominant language group would oppose the use of this language (say, a tribal language) on an equal footing with their language.[2]

7.3 APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

Some possible educational strategies that could be used in different language situations across the country are presented in Table 7.1. It should be noted that these situations and suggested strategies are presented in an over-simplified manner. The actual language situation and the other variables (teachers, social group, language attitudes) are far more complex and form a continuum that defies a precise categorization into one or the other pre-defined categories. However, it is felt that a simplified presentation helps to conceptualise the range of

Table 7.1: Appropriate Educational Strategies

Situation type	*Educational Strategies*
1. Children belong to a single language background. Their *first language is the medium of instruction.* This implies that there is a homogenous linguistic situation in the area and the children speak the standard dialect (used in textbooks) at home.	Even in such schools traditional language teaching strategies need to be modified. The stress should be on comprehension from the initial stage itself. A variety of speaking, reading and writing activities need to be introduced to ensure that children develop academic skills in the language and can become independent learners. Such higher order language skills would help children 'learn to think' and 'learn how to learn'. This would require a major shift from the present rote memorization approach to a more communicative, active language learning methodology.
2. *Children's first language (a dialect) is similar to the MOI* Children have a moderate to high intelligibility of the standard dialect used at school. *The area has a high level of literacy.*	In such situations, the pre-school stage can be used to develop conversational skills in the standard dialect. In grade1, some time can be allowed for communicative oral work in the local language and the standard dialect. Explicit bridging may be used to indicate equivalent vocabulary and differences in usage. The use of home language should not be discouraged. Teachers should allow 'learning errors' in the initial stages and use techniques of positive feedback and mild correction to gradually guide children to the standard dialect.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
3. *Children's first language is considered a dialect of the regional language (RL) (which is also the MoI), but the intelligibility of the standard dialect (of the RL) is moderate to low.* Usually, in such situations, the teachers know the local language. *The motivation to learn the standard language is high and there is sufficient exposure to the standard language through TV/radio/print media. The literacy level is high* and most households have educated members who can speak the standard dialect well. Bilingualism is high among adults who often use the standard dialect with	The pre-school should be utilized for development of oral-communication skills in the local language through a structured curriculum. Depending on the children's motivation to learn the second language, some amount of simple oral activities in the standard language could also be included at the pre-school stage. At least half a year should be allowed in grade 1 for further development of oral skills in the first language (L1). Pre-numeracy and initial numbers could be done in L1. Literacy (reading and writing) to be initiated through L1. Following this, a structured transition approach may be followed. The following bridging strategy could be used in grade1: i. An L1 class (where lessons, stories/concepts are taught in L1) is followed by an I2 class where the same concepts are repeated in L2. ii. Explicit bridging from L1 to L2 is used to point out the similarities and differences in words, sounds, symbols and grammatical structures in the two languages. Use of bilingual story books, picture and word cards, graded reading material in L2, activity and worksheets in L1 and L2 would help provide a smooth transition to L2.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
children at home. In this situation type only non-tribal areas have been included. **This would be the situation,** for example, in the better off areas in Madhya Pradesh where the local langu-age is Nimadi, Bagheli or Budelkhandi; similar socio-economic background areas of Bihar where Maithili and Magadhi is spoken; Kamrupiya language speaking areas in central and western Assam or better off Koshali speaking areas in western Orissa, where there is considerable exposure to the stan-dard dialect/language. Areas of high	The grade 1 textbook that introduces literacy through L1 and then helps to provide bridging support to L2 would need to be specially prepared. A part of the grade 2 textbook would also need to be different from the standard textbook to ensure that the language used is comprehensible to children. Thus, the vocabulary would need to be controlled in the textbooks of grade 2. Teachers would need special training to be able to implement the transition to L2 smoothly. In the classroom, there should be positive messages about the local dialect/language. The teachers should not keep switching between the two dialects/languages but use the two languages in a structured manner. For difficult concepts, children's L1 could be used to offer explanations. In grade 2 (and even in grade3, depending upon the fluency and comprehension of children), teachers would need to keep testing the children's vocabulary and comprehension and pitch the topic at their level of language ability.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
literacy where Kului, Mandyali or Chambeali are spoken could also illustrate this category. Marwari and Rajas-thani speaking regions in high literacy areas of Rajasthan; Khandeshi speaking areas in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh; Garhwali and Konkani speaking areas could also be included in this category.	*However, in many situations, such an elaborate transition strategy may not be necessary.* Wherever home support and encouragement to learn the standard language is high, the strategy could be limited to the training of teachers on the use of appropriate language teaching methods in early grade1, especially by allowing considerable oral work in the local dialect and the standard dialect and guided bridging between the two dialects. *A structured, standard language immersion approach* (as opposed to the submersion approach followed at present) could also work, if implemented properly. This would imply teaching in the standard language, with modified texts (in grade 1, at least) and teachers who are oriented to ensuring a 'comprehensible input' at all times (see Chapter 5).
4. *The children's first language (MT) is considered a dialect of the main regional language, though there is low intelligibility bet-ween the two languages.* Included in this	A bilingual approach similar to the one outlined for category 3 may be used. However, the period of use of L1 as medium of instruction should include pre-school and grades 1 and 2. L2 instruction could be included in grade 1(as a subject). L2 literacy could be introduced in early grade 2 using appropriate bridging materials and teaching strategies. In the last quarter of grade 2, L2

Situation type	Educational Strategies
category are *low literacy, non-tribal areas*. For example, areas where the children's first language is Goalparia (Assam), Magadhi, Bhojpuri (Bihar), Chattisgarhi (Chattisgarh and Western Orissa), Lambadi (Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra), Sadan/ Nagpuri (Bihar, West Bengal) with low literacy and poor exposure to the standard from of the state language. It would also include *tribal house-holds residing in areas where these local languages have become the mother tongues or 'second mother tongues' for the tribal*	could be used as a medium for one or two subjects. From grade 3 onwards, L2 could be the only medium of instruction. The approach has to be implemented in consultation with the local community and socio-cultural and/or linguistic associations representing these language groups (if available). Teachers would require a special training for teaching of second language. Grammar-based instruc-tion or rote memorization skills will not help in real learning of L2. In many of these marginalized areas, the local culture and context is very different from the regional mainstream. Therefore, it is important that the materials developed for grade 1 and 2 in the L1 and also the bridging materials like diglot books (containing the same stories in two languages) and initial literacy primer in L2 should be based on the local socio-cultural context with the involvement of the community and respected, educated representatives of these cultural -linguistic communities. Even in these areas, if the pre-school component is implemented well, it may be possible to work through a simpler transition strategy in grade 1 itself. A lot of curricular time in grade 1 would need

Situation type	Educational Strategies
population, e.g. Gonds in Raigarh district in Chattisgarh, who speak Chhattisgarhi at home or Gonds in Sidhi district in Madhya Pradesh, who speak Bagheli as their home language.	to be set aside for oral work in the standard language. The teachers would need to be specially equipped to help children learn the standard language effectively. Then, modified grade 1 textbooks in the standard language could be used from the later stage of grade 1. Worksheets or workbooks using the local language could be used for initiating literacy.
5. Children's first langu-age is *very different from the regional language.* This category comprises areas where the *tribal language is spoken at home.* Most tribal languages belong to a different stock com-pared to the language used at school. *In most of these areas, literacy levels are low, and in general the commitment of parents for*	The appropriate approach to use in such situations is the transitional bilingual model outlined in chapter 5. The stages would be: • Develop confidence and compe-tence in oral use of L1. • Begin reading and writing in L1. • Begin to learn to speak and understand L2. • Build fluency in reading and writing in L1. L1 used as medium of instruction. • Build fluency in oral L2. Bridging to reading and writing in L2 and developing fluency in L2. • L2 used as medium of instruction, while L1 continues to be taught as a subject (if possible). *Many of these languages would need to be developed further*

Situation Type	Educational Strategies
education of their children is not too strong. These would be areas that are somewhat isolated and where the proportion of non-tribal population is limited. The exposure and desire to learn the regional language is low. Often a lingua franca is used for communication bet-ween different com-munities, e.g. *Sadri* in Jharkhand and parts of Assam, Desia and Sadri in Orissa. In some areas, this lingua franca is also used as the home language. Bilin-gualism among adults is largely confined to the tribal language and the local	especially through a process of planned vocabulary development, standardization of word and phrase usage, aiming at a consensus about a standard form of the varying dialects that may be in use and development of appropriate orthography (writing system). Since the socio-cultural context in these areas is totally different from the 'mainstream', the curriculum developed should be culturally relevant, using the local context and everyday experiences of the children in the initial stages. This would not only ensure that the content is easily understood by the children but would also help inculcate positive feelings about their language and culture and reduce alienation. This approach places huge demands on the teacher. He/she should: • Be fully bilingual with proficiency in both languages. • Have a good knowledge about the students' cultural background and have a positive attitude towards tribal children and culture. • Be aware of the somewhat different learning styles of children in such communities • Imbibe appropriate second language teaching strategies.

Situation type	*Educational Strategies*
market language, which is different from the language used at school. In some cases, these mother tongues are erroneously considered as dialects of the regional languages. (For example in Karnataka, Jenu Kuruba, Hotaki Pikki are considered as dialects of Kannada, though there is low mutual intelligibility with Kannada.)	
6. *Children's first language is an established, recognized language that is used as a medium of instruction in another state(s) or in other parts of the same state, but not in the identified area.*	In areas where there is a concentration of population speaking the language that is recognized in another state/region and the people have maintained links with the other state/region (with which they share linguistic-cultural affinity), there may be a desire that their children should be educated in their L1 at all stages of school education. If such a demand exists, and reflects the majority opinion, then this language should be introduced as MoI at all stages of instruction. Instead of fresh development of curriculum, materials and training programmes, help could be taken from the

Situation type	Educational Strategies
This is the situation in most inter-state borders (e.g. Marathi speaking population in Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra border or Telugu speaking population in Orissa-Andhra Pradesh border) or migrant population in cities, towns and economically better-off areas or a resettled group.	adjoining state where this language is the language of instruction at school level. A late-exit transitional bilingual model can be used in other situations where the people prefer that their children learn through the regional language. Here, a complete transition to L2 can take place at the end of primary stage (grade 4 or 5). Initially L1 can be used as MoI and L2 can be introduced from grade 2. Both L1 and L2 can be used as medium of instruction in grades 3 and 4. Even after transition to L2 as MoI, L1 can continue to be taught as a subject at the upper primary stage. Since L1 is a developed language and is used as MOI elsewhere, material development is not a major challenge. Teachers would need to be bilingual and well trained in second language teaching methodology.
7. *Children in a village/small geographical area that is the catchment area of a primary*	This is a difficult set of situations to introduce appropriate educational strategies. Even elsewhere in the world, there are not many successful experiments in addressing such situations.

Situation type	*Educational Strategies*
school have diverse language backgrounds. Thus each classroom has a multilingual situation. There could be a variety of such situa-tions with several combinations of langu-ages including tribal and non-tribal languages.	If in a school there are more than 15-20 children speaking a particular language and that language is being used as MoI in adjoining areas, then that language should be offered as a medium of instruction by separating out this group of children and recruiting teachers for this language group. This would mean implementation of the resolution of the Chief Ministers' Conference of 1961. This is a practice followed in Assam, where it is common to have classes in two mediums going on for separate groups of children and with a separate set of teachers in the same school. Assamese-Bengali and Assamese-Bodo are the most common combinations in these 'mixed-medium' schools. Of course, this practice has other implications. It has to be ensured that there are adequate upper primary and secondary schools in that minority language in nearby areas, and that parents are willing to continue their children's education in their first language. If there are adequate number of such children in a group of villages, it would justify setting up of new middle schools with the minority language as MoI.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
	If there are 3 or more language groups represented in a classroom, then one of the languages, preferably the main regional language, can be used as the MoI and separate language teaching-assistants may be provided for each L1 group to help these children during and before/after classes. This would require a supportive environment for the use of minority languages in the classroom and a healthy respect for diversity. Peer interaction allowing cross-learning of languages should be encouraged. The pre-school stage may be strengthened by providing at least two years of language development (in L1) in single language groups.
	A variety of graded materials in the MoI should be used to help children pick up the language in a phased manner. As far as possible, individual attention should be given to each child to address his/her specific need for learning the MoI.
	Here the biggest constraint is that teachers are not likely to know all the languages spoken by the children.
	In some countries, a two-way developmental bilingual/bicultural model (See chapter 5) has been tried out in situations where there are an almost equal numbers of children of two major language

Situation type	Educational Strategies
	backgrounds (e.g. English and Spanish). This would be difficult to implement in most parts of India since such equal representation is not common and, more importantly, one of the socio-linguistic groups always enjoys higher prestige than the other(s). Thus, in a mixed social group situation of tribal and non-tribal children, it would be difficult to implement a two-way model that uses both the tribal and the regional non-tribal language as mediums of instruction.
7A. *Diverse language backgrounds exist but a lingua franca or link language is widely spoken.*	In situations where a lingua franca is used widely for communication outside the home (e.g. Sadri in tea gardens in eastern Assam, Chhattisgarhi in parts of Chhattisgarh, *Desia* in southern Orissa), it could be considered for use as the L1 in a transitional bilingual education programme. However, it would need to be ascertained if the lingua franca is widely spoken and is known to young children at the stage of entry to school. In some areas, link languages like Sadri, Desia *or* Chhattisgarhi have even become home languages for tribal households. But, often, young children do not have much understanding of the link language.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
7B. *There is a multiplicity of languages (MTs) in a small area, e.g. in the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, hill districts (Karbi Anglong and NC hills) of Assam. In a particular village/groups of villages, only a particular MT may be used, so schools do not have a serious multi-lingual situation, but the challenge is that of a very large number of MTs spoken by a small number of people in a limited geographic area.*	It is difficult to suggest any appropriate educational strategy for such areas, if it is considered impractical to use the individual mother tongues as mediums of instruction in the initial stages. The only option is to use an extended (at least two years) of pre-school stage for developing adequate oral skills in the mother tongue. Also English (or the regional language) can be introduced orally at this stage. In grade 1, a very structured methodology should be used for teaching the second language for as long a period as possible before the L2 is used for teaching subjects. Some pre- numeracy and early numeracy work can be done through the mother tongue. The curriculum should be so structured that the content at any stage should not be beyond the linguistic competence of the students. Structured second language immersion strategy with a very intensive grounding of teachers in second language teaching techniques would be required. This is a difficult task because acquiring academic skills in the second language usually requires at least 4-5 years of instruction.

Situation type	Educational Strategies
	Special materials for structured second language acquisition and a modified content in the textbooks would be required.
7B1. In some cases *there is a pidgin language that serves as the link language between the different tribal language groups.* This pidgin (Nagamese in Nagaland, Haflong Hindi in NC Hills district) is a simplified (often called corrup-ted) form of a more widely spoken langu-age that has been influenced by several other languages.	While the pidgin language may be widely spoken by adults, it may not be used much within homes and therefore the children's understanding of the pidgin may be quite limited at the stage of entry into school. Also, there is usually little support for the use of the pidgin outside the informal, conversational sphere. It is usually considered an 'inferior' language and is not owned by any of the language groups. There are also no linguistic or cultural associations that could support the work of development of these pidgins for their use as medium of instruction.
7B2. In many of these areas there is *now a trend to introduce English as a medium of instruction* from	There has been little teacher preparation for teaching English as a second language in the initial stages. English is used directly to transact academic content. The curriculum and teaching-learning materials have not been developed specifically for children who

Situation type	Educational Strategies
grade 1 itself since no other mother tongue is acceptable to all the tribal groups. In states like Nagaland and Mizoram, English is being used as a medium of instruc-tion for several years.	have no knowledge of English in the initial stages. Books being used in private English medium schools have been picked up for use in government schools where the socio-economic background of children is very different from those in the private schools. In some areas, teachers themselves do not have the necessary proficiency in English. If the use of English cannot be avoided, appropriate materials and teaching practices of a structured L2 immersion programme would need to be used.

possible field situations and educational strategies that could be further refined, once there is a much better and in-depth understanding of the specific situations.

7.4 MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION - INDIAN CONTEXT

Some people argue that these approaches of mother tongue instruction or transition to the second language outlined above are not feasible or necessary in the Indian context. They raise the following kind of issues. Responses to these issues are also included in the paragraphs below.

i.   *India has too many languages and it would never be possible to introduce MT instruction in so many languages:*

Papua New Guinea and Philippines which have a great diversity in spoken languages have attempted ambitious programmes for introducing mother tongue instruction. In Papua New Guinea the mother tongue instruction in the first three years is now being implemented in almost 400 languages. There may be a need to prioritise and identify languages on which work needs to be initiated in the first phase. This decision could be based on the number of speakers of the various languages in a particular region; their understanding of the regional language; the motivation to learn the regional language; or even on a pragmatic consideration of the availability of adequate experts and motivated community leaders.

ii. *In almost all parts of our country, there are diverse multi-lingual situations that would make the task of introducing appropriate educational strategies virtually impossible:*

There may be a lack of clarity on how to work out suitable strategies in such situations, but there are enough ideas about the direction in which we need to work that have been mentioned in Category 7 in Table 7.1. These have to be pursued if we are committed to addressing the serious difficulties faced by children learning through a second language.

iii. *Often it is very difficult to be sure of the 'real MT' of the children. Children may actually be speaking a language different from their ancestral mother tongue even at home. Also, there is a great variety in the dialects of a language from one place to another:*

Before any educational intervention is thought of, a detailed socio-linguistic survey would be necessary. A well-designed socio-linguistic survey would typically provide information about the literacy status in an identified geographical unit; the extent of monolingualism/multilingualism in different villages; language proficiency of people (understanding, speaking, reading and writing) in different languages; language(s) used at home; exposure to TV and radio programmes in the regional language; languages used by children, preference of parents for a particular language for schooling of children; attitude towards the mainstream language; value attached to the mother tongue; feeling of identity limited to language; existence of dialects of the language and their mutual intelligibility; teachers' opinion about local languages and their use in school; shifts in language use etc. This understanding of 'real' first languages of children and attitudes of the community about the use of language at school would serve as the basis to plan further work.

The diversity of dialects has to be taken into account by involving community representatives, writers of these languages/ dialects and evolving a consensus on the dialect or combination of dialects to be used in the written form. If a language is spoken across large areas with strong regional influences, it may be necessary to use different forms (variants) in different regions or states.

iv. *There is a very high incidence of bilingualism in our country and most of the minority language speakers can speak two to three languages. Therefore there is really no need for elaborate bilingual strategies:*

This has been discussed in chapter 2. The 'folk bilingualism' among adults has no relevance for educational strategy for children who at the age of 5-6 years join school with little or no understanding of the standard language.

v. *Evaluations of transitional bilingual educational programmes have shown varied results in terms of the achievements of students in the second language and other subjects:*

This is true. However, it is argued that poor results in some programmes are attributable to the disadvantaged socio-economic status of linguistic minority students' families, and more importantly, the incomplete and inappropriate implementation of the planned bilingual strategies.[3] To repeat what was said in Chapter 5, bilingual programmes require an intensive developmental phase and comprehensive inputs of teacher development, engagement of bilingual teachers, use of specially developed materials in first and second language, regular supervision and academic support. In most programmes that have been implemented on a large scale, the quality and 'completeness' of all inputs has been variable, resulting in variable quality. This cannot, however, justify rejection of bilingual education strategies altogether.

Clearly, four kinds of approaches would be necessary to address the children's first language issue-

a. For areas/schools where the children's first language is a *well developed language that is being used as a medium of instruction elsewhere;*

b. For areas/schools where the children's *first language is a dialect of the main state language* (whose standard dialect is used as the medium of instruction in schools);

c. For areas/schools where the children's *first language is a very different language that is unwritten* and needs to be elaborated and standardized; and

d. For areas/schools with a *multilingual situation.*

Each of these categories of approaches would include a variety of strategies based on the various situation types discussed earlier. Deciding the appropriate strategy and planning for it would require skill and commitment at the state and district levels.

When it is not possible to introduce the most appropriate educational strategy for some reason, it must be ensured that

in the interim at least the four non-negotiable conditions, viz. (i) some promotion of the child's first language, (ii) a modified curriculum and teaching strategy to ensure that the second language used at any point of time is comprehensible to the children, (iii) bilingual teachers, and (iv) use of appropriate second language teaching methods are made available in all such schools. This would imply that the children's first language be used in the initial stages, at least during pre-school and early grade 1. Also, there should be an effort to help children acquire the second language through appropriate second language teaching strategies in grade 1 before it is used as a medium of instruction. Even if development of the child's first language is not promoted and the second language is introduced from the beginning, *it is important to ensure that the children's first language is not derided as an inferior language.* The teachers should not ask children not to speak in their first language. Also, appropriate language teaching strategies must be used and some time should be allowed to children to begin learning the second language. The assumption is that the pre-school stage would provide opportunity for the learning of oral L2. This (introduction of L2 as MoI in grade 1 itself) could be an option in areas of situation **Type 3** (Table 7.1), where a dialect of the regional language is spoken and there is overwhelming demand for use of the standard form of regional language as the medium of instruction. This may also be considered in areas of situation **Type 4** where the literacy is low, but it has not been possible to convince the community to use the local dialect as the medium of instruction in the initial period. However, this would definitely be an 'imperfect' solution.. Its success would depend on the extent to which the educational objectives for the pre-school stage have been achieved.

7.5 OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Pre-school education is crucial

It is well known that pre-school education of the appropriate kind for children of 3 to 6 years age can contribute immensely

to their cognitive, social and emotional development. Early childhood education with an appropriate curriculum and well-trained teachers should, therefore, be included as an important and integral element of the elementary education system. But, pre-school education is even more crucial in the language situations that are being discussed in this report. Almost all the successful strategies for education of children belonging to minority language speaking background across the world include 2 to 3 years of pre-school education that focuses, among other aspects, on the development of oral skills in the first language, and in some cases, initiation of oral work in the standard/second language. In fact the basis for the entire new programme of mother tongue instruction in Papua New Guinea was the very successful, community based village pre-schools initiative that was implemented earlier. In Gautemala, the mother tongue instruction programme in a majority of schools is confined to pre-primary and grade 1.

The pre-school stage would offer a great opportunity for implementation of a communicative, interactive approach to the learning of language, including a basic familiarization with the second language. Of course, the curriculum would need to be designed appropriately in accordance with the need of each type of language situation. Teachers at the pre-school stage should be trained in the use of various language- teaching techniques that prepare children to move to the stage of literacy with a good foundation in oral skills. Wherever, an early transition to the second language is planned, the teachers would need to be fully equipped with appropriate methodologies for second language acquisition.

While, education for 6 to 14 year old children has now been enshrined as a Fundamental Right, there is no provision for making quality pre-school education for 3 to 6 year old children- free, compulsory and universally available. At present, in India, the biggest pre-school programme is implemented through the early childhood education (ECE) component of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme

through the *Anganwadi* centers.⁴ While, reportedly 20.43 million children in the age group of 3 to 6 years are receiving pre-school education under ICDS, it is well known that this is a weak component of the ICDS programme. Lack of emphasis on this component within the programme; inadequate training of the Anganwadi workers for pre-school education; inappropriate or non-existent teaching-learning materials; and poorly designed curricula have meant that educational objectives set out for children at this stage are not being met at all. The pre-school component at the Anganwadi center has little convergence with the formal primary school. There are some smaller initiatives for providing pre-school education, being implemented through the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and some state government schemes. Privately run pre-schools in rural and deprived urban areas are of poor quality and focus on teaching of the 3 Rs. Some of these schools also include English either as a subject, or even as a medium of instruction. This aspect makes them more attractive compared to the regional language medium schools. This is a matter of grave concern, since a large number of children are now being subjected to the tyranny of poor quality and inappropriate 'English medium' pre-schooling. The situation and prospects of pre-school education are currently bleak.

Appropriate language teaching methods in early grades

This aspect has been discussed earlier. A drastic overhaul of language teaching methods in the early grades is an absolute pre-requisite for ensuring a good foundation in the first language and a successful transition to the second language. It must be realized that language learning does not occur as a result of instruction about the rules of language, or through repetitive, rote memorization drills. The teaching of language, especially a second language, should be initiated in a communicative, conversational mode and should provide enough opportunities for meaningful interaction in that language. Children should be encouraged to speak to the teachers and among themselves

in the second language. Their errors in the use of the language should be seen as a part of the learning process of figuring out the rules and patterns of the unfamiliar language. Reading and writing activities should be made more meaningful and interesting. Encouragement for speaking, reading and writing about topics that are of interest and importance to the children is especially crucial for children who may not get a chance to use that language outside of school. The teacher would need to keep track of the progress of each child. She must use language in a form that is understood by the children using simple sentence structures, repetition of patterns of language use, paraphrasing, and repeatedly checking if the children are able to comprehend.

This would require a complete overhaul of the teaching-learning materials and intensive training programmes for teachers on language teaching. Most of these principles are equally applicable to the teaching of the first language. The most effective strategy would be to introduce a strong content on language teaching and learning in the early primary grades, second language acquisition, and bilingual teaching, in the pre-service teacher training curriculum. Unfortunately, our pre-service training curricula are usually modelled on the B.Ed. syllabus that is meant for the secondary stage of education. Thus, a thorough overhaul of the pre-service teachers' training curriculum and its delivery would be a crucial input into the system to address the language-disadvantage issue in schools.

Sensitisation of teachers and education system on diversity in classrooms

This is a completely neglected aspect of teacher development. The pre-service and in-service training programmes for teachers do not prepare them for the culturally and linguistically diverse nature of the classrooms. Apart from the issue of an attitudinal orientation that respects diversity among children, educationists and teachers need to understand the need for using strategies appropriate for children who belong

to communities with a predominantly oral tradition and a culture vastly different from the mainstream community. In identified areas, training of teachers should include a component of developing an understanding of tribal culture and knowledge systems.

Teaching of English as a subject

The third language, especially a foreign language, to which there is little exposure outside school, should be introduced only after the children have had a good grounding in the first and second languages. This is all the more necessary because English has a script very different from that of the language used as the medium of instruction. Ideally, English should be introduced from grade 6, after the primary stage. While, most states have introduced English from grade 3 onwards, some have included English as a subject from grade 1 itself. This has been done, reportedly, on the basis of demand from the parents. If the introduction of English in the early primary grades cannot be avoided, English should be taught in a completely non-threatening environment using communicative and interactive teaching practices. During the early primary grades, English teaching should be confined to the use of appropriate oral activities.

Children's first language as an additional subject

In some states, in response to the demand from associations and political leadership of ethno-linguistic minorities, certain mother tongues have been introduced as language subjects from grade 3 to 5. This has been done more to appease these communities, rather than as a solution to the language problem faced by the children speaking these mother tongues. In fact, the additional subject, if it is taught at all, only adds to the children's burden. Since the first language is not introduced in grade 1, the children continue to learn the content in an unfamiliar second language. Often, the 'real' objective of the demand by these organizations is to secure the employment

of some youth as teachers for the teaching of the mother tongue subject. Once a few teachers of the community have been recruited, the representative organization and the state educational administration quickly forget that the objective of mitigating the children's burden of non-comprehension has not been addressed at all.

Better School Infrastructure, especially teacher availability in these areas

A significant proportion of schools in many tribal areas, where a serious language problem exists, have only one or two teachers and do not function regularly. The kind of educational strategies being discussed in this Report would require availability of an adequate number of motivated teachers. Special attention would need to be given to grade 1 by providing a dedicated teacher. In the areas visited by the research team, most schools had only 2 or 3 teachers. The teacher responsible for grade 1 also teaches one or two other grades and spends the least amount of time in grade 1. Without an improved provisioning, none of the educational initiatives suggested here would have any chance of success.

Greater attention to quality improvement activities for languages other than the state's official language(s)

Quality improvement activities like revision of textbooks, pre and in-service training of teachers and regular academic supervision are generally neglected or delayed for languages used as mediums of instruction, other than the main state language. Very often, textbooks do not reach in time. Schools with these 'other languages' as mediums of instruction have inadequate or/and poorly trained teachers and no supervisory personnel.[5] Since training and academic support institutions like SCERT, DIET and BRC (Block Resource Centres) do not have a faculty for these languages, there is little academic input provided to these schools. Ensuring that the 'other language' medium schools receive the entire range of quality inputs being

provided to the state language schools, would require a change in the mindset and a series of administrative measures that would arrange for adequate personnel and funds for work on the curriculum, training, academic support and school supervision for these languages and schools.

The case of Urdu

Urdu is one of the mediums of instruction at the primary stage in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Jammu and Kashmir, Urdu was the medium of instruction at the primary stage in the Kashmir Valley till last year. Now, in a sudden decision, English has been made the medium of instruction from grade 1 in all schools. In several states, Urdu is taught as a language subject either as a second or third language. There is an acute shortage of Urdu-medium schools in several parts of the country. Also, many of these schools do not have adequate teachers. The numbers of such schools has declined steadily in almost all states, but most sharply in Uttar Pradesh, owing to the shrinking of recruitment of Urdu-medium teachers. Also, the quality of teaching in Urdu medium schools is abysmal. Training of Urdu teachers and renewal of the curriculum for Urdu medium have been neglected for a long time. The 'Hindi or Urdu' medium of instruction debate in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has strong emotive dimensions and needs to be addressed sensitively. The assessment of the 'real' need for Urdu medium schools should be based on the actual speech patterns of the population and the first languages of young children in Muslim dominated areas. It is likely that non-educational reasons could become more dominant in this discussion, in the absence of a sensitive and non-partisan approach and 'hard' facts about language-use and proficiency. The interests of children need to be kept at the centre of any dialogue and decision-making process while deciding on the need for more Urdu-medium schools. The quality improvement processes in Urdu-medium schools need to be greatly strengthened.

Many middle and secondary 'Madrassa' schools in the states of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are affiliated to the state secondary/higher secondary boards and follow the state government curriculum. In addition to the regular subjects, Urdu, Arabic and Islamic theology are also taught. This increases the burden of learning new languages on the children and also overloads the curriculum. Similarly, in the religious Maktabs and Madrassas, students learn in Urdu and Arabic, which are not their first languages. This ensures that the focus is entirely on rote memorization.

7.6 HOW CAN SUCH INITIATIVES BE INITIATED AND IMPLEMENTED?

The Issue of Commitment

The commitment to introduce mother tongue instruction has been quite strong in certain countries that had only a colonial education system with a foreign language (of the occupiers) as the medium of instruction at the time they became independent. Their resolve to introduce the local languages in primary education is almost an extension of their desire to shrug off the colonial past. In India, several languages have been used for a long time as mediums of instruction in most of the states. Therefore, the commitment to work for introduction of more languages is not too strong. In some states, there are strong feelings of linguistic identity that promote conservative 'language-in-education' policies. There are several other reasons for a lukewarm attitude towards this serious issue that have been discussed elsewhere. We have seen that the initiatives on the language issue (in large scale education programmes in India) have been based on the conceptualization and commitment of one or two key individuals in a few states. The initiatives in Orissa and Assam were discontinued or reduced to tokenistic activities with the transfer or sidelining of one or two key project personnel. The promising 'Multilingual Education Initiative' in Andhra Pradesh is also dependent on the commitment of external resource persons and the support from

a few senior bureaucrats. Most of the initiatives in other states have taken a 'welfare' approach- a sort of grand concession to the needs of disadvantaged groups. The policy planners and implementers 'feel good' and benevolent that they are going out of their way in doing 'something' for the unfortunate tribal groups. This approach implies that even half-hearted measures like those discussed in Chapter 6 are considered worthy of appreciation.

It is high time that the serious learning problems faced by children who are forced to study through an unfamiliar language are viewed from a 'rights perspective'. Having to study through a language that they cannot understand *is a denial of 'equal opportunity to learn' and should be clearly recognized as such.* Unless this is made a rights issue, it would not become a priority area for action. The concern for *children's learning* should be highlighted as a rights issue, initially in a highly visible campaign to build opinion and commitment. This advocacy campaign should bring out the educational concerns and also the fact that children are being denied the right to learn appropriately. This campaign should be spearheaded by activists, academics, and leaders of some socio-linguistic groups. Alongside, a dialogue should be initiated with representatives of major socio-cultural organizations representing these minority languages to convince them about the educational rationale for the proposed strategies.

However, this kind of advocacy can only be conducted if there are a large number of persons within and outside the education system who are committed to this cause and also understand the implications of taking up such a programme. Right now, not many educationists and activists working in tribal areas or other educationally disadvantaged areas are clear about the kind of educational strategies that are appropriate for the different kinds of socio-linguistic situations. There is a need for a systematic exercise for raising awareness about the learning issues involved and the possible strategies that can be used. These people, who should be available across the length and breadth of the country, can take up further sensitization

of the educational bureaucracy and representatives of various socio-cultural groups. The voluntary sector has also not been active in this aspect of elementary education. Most voluntary organizations (NGOs) implementing innovative educational programmes, or working as resource organizations to support efforts to improve the quality of education, do not see this issue as basic to the quality improvement effort. A significant proportion of the 'quality improvement' NGOs have focused on the promotion of intricate and fine-tuned active-learning pedagogies, little realizing that such appropriate classroom teaching-learning practices are futile in situations where children cannot even understand what is being said by the teacher. An effort should be made to enlist the support of NGOs that are convinced about this issue. This will help create a critical mass of people and groups demanding action.

The political leadership is usually very alive to popular demands. However, this kind of political support in response to a public demand would be forthcoming only when the popular opinion has gained adequate ground. This will not happen quickly. Opinions will be divided on this issue, and on the strategies that need to be adopted, not only among the educational administration but also among the leadership of the groups for whom such initiatives are being suggested. Probably, a better approach in the initial stages may be to get the backing of middle level (say, district level) political leaders who represent the constituencies where the identified socio-linguistic groups have a significant presence.

How would all this get kick-started?

This is a chicken-and-egg situation. Sustained commitment of political leaders and education policy makers can come about only if there is an unequivocal policy on this issue and a statutory/legal backing for this strand of work in elementary education. Papua New Guinea has a national policy that mandates mother tongue instruction. In the United States, there is a Supreme Court ruling, as well as legislations in most states, that make it mandatory for schools to introduce educational strategies

for students with limited English language proficiency. A legislation that mandates the introduction of measures to support children with a different first language would definitely trigger action. It would also lend support to the voices of people who demand the early implementation of appropriate educational strategies. We know that a sense of urgency now permeates the national and (some) state educational administration after the Constitutional amendment making elementary education a Fundamental Right. It has also paved the way for allocation of substantially larger funds for elementary education.

On the other hand, significant policy changes and legislation that provide for rights of minority groups are likely to come about only when the issue enjoys significant public support and has been the object of public debate and advocacy. Governments at the centre and in the states are not likely to feel pressurized to introduce a far-reaching legislation, unless they sense a groundswell of support for it.

So, how will the 'right to an equal opportunity to learn' be secured for about one-fifth to one-fourth of all children who are of school-going age? The 'right to elementary education' came about as a result of the convergence of several strands of action. There had been judicial activism on this issue. A sustained campaign had been conducted by academics and children's rights activists. The political and bureaucratic leadership at the national level and in some states also played a constructive and progressive role. The international community, including the United Nations and the donor community, also hastened action on this front through the Education for All (EFA) initiative. Maybe, a combination of such initiatives would be necessary in the endeavour to secure the right to appropriate educational strategies for children facing a serious language disadvantage. Will there be enough academics, activists, political leaders and administrators interested in pursuing this goal? At the international level, the EFA movement has avoided this issue. It does not find mention in the various international declarations on education, or in the priorities of multilateral

funding agencies that are financing elementary education programmes in India[6]. Probably, the issue of the right to education has been seen as a very basic right that our country had failed to establish many decades after Independence. The 'right to learn' for linguistically disadvantaged children, may not draw the same kind of support. It needs to be understood that the right to appropriate educational strategies in schools with children who have a different first language is just an extension of the basic right of each child to 'quality' basic education.

Community Involvement in Education Initiatives

The local community where the programme is to be implemented has to be involved in the process of decision-making about the introduction of the new strategy with a first language instruction component. This would ensure that the community understands the nature of the intervention, the benefits for their children, and is supportive of the steps being taken. When the language and culture of the community is very different from that of the dominant group, it is necessary that the community representatives, including its leaders, are involved in the entire process of curriculum development. This would help to make the curriculum and materials context-specific and relevant to the children's environment. This has been the strategy adopted in the Papua New Guinea Programme, as well as the Multilingual Education strategy that has recently been initiated in Andhra Pradesh.

We have already mentioned the importance of involvement of representatives of apex organizations or associations of the socio-linguistic/ethnic group for whom the educational intervention is proposed. Several initiatives in our country, including the introduction of primers in different tribal languages in the '80s and '90s and the Saora programme of Orissa DPEP, fell through owing to opposition from political leaders and other representatives of tribal groups, after the field level intervention had been launched. Such efforts to introduce initial instruction

in the tribal language have been dismissed as ploys to keep the community isolated and backward. In fact, many of these organizations have demanded introduction of English medium at the primary stage. The issue is - how is a balance is to be struck between the effort for involvement and commitment of the local community at the village or group of villages level *and* the need to get the backing of the higher level leadership of these communities? Should work be initiated at the decentralized level, with intensive local community participation and then flow to the higher levels to influence macro-language policies and interventions on a larger scale? Or, should decisions be taken at the state level with the agreement of the state level leadership of these groups, before initiating field-level strategies? The choice between the two approaches should be based on the particular context, the nature of the representative organizations and their hold over the communities. Some communities may not have political leadership or a strong socio-cultural organization because they may be numerically small or not well organized. As far as possible, consultative processes should be initiated at both levels at the same time.

Another important aspect of the process of convincing the community to support the new strategy is to attempt to understand what would motivate the community to support an initiative of first language instruction. Since most minority language communities are keen that their children learn and get educated in the dominant state language, the most crucial argument would be the role of first language instruction in better learning of the second language as well as the likely improvement in the learning of other subjects too. This pedagogical argument may not be very convincing for many educationally backward communities. Sometimes, the argument that first language instruction would make the children better adjusted to their social and cultural environment and would reduce their increasing alienation from the traditional world-view and life-style could be more persuasive. For using this argument, the educators who establish contact with the local community and

their organization would need to have a good understanding of the local culture, and be sensitive to the world-view of that community. A major problem with the state and district level education system is their complete lack of commitment and sensitivity to the needs of educationally disadvantaged groups. Probably, some local voluntary organizations or progressive leaders of the local community would be in a better position to enter into a dialogue with the community on these issues. The education system should approach such groups and individuals and give them the space required for interacting with the community on behalf of the state's education system. There is a strong sense of identity among certain ethno-linguistic and social groups who are already asserting their identity and demanding recognition for their language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, and also as an additional language at the state level. The Bodo language has already been included in the Eighth Schedule and is also recognized as an official language in some parts of Assam. The Santal community has also been quite vocal about its demands. It would be relatively easier to initiate new educational strategies, based on a transitional bilingual approach with initial instruction in the first language, by piggybacking the already existing demand for linguistic rights in these areas. Work on introduction of these languages at the primary level could be started on a priority basis.

7.7 SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Begin with socio-linguistic mapping in identified areas

This should be the starting point of the entire exercise to devise appropriate educational strategies. It has been emphasized earlier that the focus of the survey, apart from other objectives, should be the language proficiency of 5 to 6 year old children. Following this mapping, the work of planning strategies should be prioritized and sequenced for different areas and language situations.

Develop and implement comprehensive strategies

All aspects of implementation of the strategy should be planned and implemented in a comprehensive manner. Thus, community awareness generation, development of a context-specific curriculum and appropriate teaching-learning materials, recruitment of bilingual teachers and their intensive training, pre and in-service training of regular teachers to implement the educational strategy, introduction of appropriate learner assessment methods, programme evaluation, continued involvement of the community in school management and learning issues of their children, regular feedback and monitoring, should all be included in a holistic strategy. We have seen earlier how discrete, piecemeal interventions have not been successful. Once an effort to introduce mother tongue instruction fails, it is always quoted thereafter to argue that the approach or principle itself was ill conceived. This would make the task of initiating another strategy very difficult at a later stage. If there is proper commitment and backing of the political and educational leadership for the programme, it is unlikely that the implementation would be half-hearted, as has happened in the past.

Capacity building and sensitisation of the education system

Education policy makers, administrators and faculty members of academic institutions, like the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and Tribal Research Institutes (TRI), need to be oriented on the theoretical perspectives related to the 'language-in-education' issue and the educational programmes being implemented across the world. Apart from the knowledge of various perspectives and initiatives, education personnel need to be sensitized to regard this dimension of

work as a crucial component of the work of quality improvement. They need to understand that the right to understand what is being taught and the language in which teaching is taking place is the foundation of the 'right to learn'. The education system would need to use a multi-disciplinary approach by involving anthropologists and linguists in this effort. There is also the need to work closely with the Tribal Welfare departments and several other academic institutions and voluntary organizations at the state level. There has to be a realization that working for introduction of some languages as mediums of instruction would mean very intensive, long-term and sustained effort, as it involves language codification, elaboration and development of the written system through a process of community involvement. At present, the education system at the national and state level is not committed or oriented to the work of this nature. Ideally, such work should be carried out by forging partnerships with individuals, academic institutions and associations of various socio-cultural groups.

Work on this aspect would need to get institutionalized. Thus, specific institutions at the state and district level should get additional financial support and human resources to continue to undertake academic work for identified languages. These could be CIIL, University Departments, State Councils of Educational Research and Training, Tribal Research Institutes, or Districts Institutes of Education and Training. For decentralized academic work and follow-up, special cells could be set up in the DIETs or at the sub-district level, or some Block Resource Centres could be upgraded by providing additional academic staff. The large number of Block and Cluster Resource Centres that are now available in all states under SSA for regular academic support and school visits can play a very effective role in continuous teacher preparation in such areas.

Involvement of NGOs

At present not many NGOs are working on these specific issues of helping children who face a serious language

disadvantage at school. It is possible to encourage a large number of organizations working in tribal areas and who have already built a good rapport with people in tribal areas to work on research and advocacy on the language issue. They could also be encouraged and supported financially to take up pilot projects. In the initial stage, there would be a need for a lot of trialling of educational strategies and decentralized experiments that could be implemented in NGO-run educational institutions, as well as government schools. We should not shy away from seeking help from experts and professionals who have worked in other countries for establishing bilingual models in situations similar to those in India. Generally, in India, we feel quite smug about the knowledge and experience available within our country. However, in the area of promoting mother tongue instruction or good strategies for learning the second language, there are not too many success stories available in our country.

Complex field situations

Several tribal languages are spoken in two or more states, with different dialects. Children speaking these languages are presently studying through different mediums depending on the state where they are located. For example, Koya children are studying in Telugu medium in Andhra Pradesh and in Oriya in Orissa. Santal children who are first language speakers of Santali are studying in Assamese medium in Western Assam; Bengali medium in Bengal; Oriya medium in Orissa and Hindi medium in Bihar/Jharkhand. This would mean that language development and curriculum work would need to take place in each of these states for the same language. Instead of the same script across the country for this language, it should preferably be introduced in different states using the script of the main state language that is being used as the medium of instruction.

The biggest challenge is to work out appropriate classroom strategies for multilingual situations (schools/classrooms that

have children with two or more first languages). This would require action research, innovative experiments, study of the few experiments in some other countries on teaching in multilingual classrooms, intensive teacher preparation, and academic support. At present, there is not even a clear idea about the extent and nature of multilingual classrooms in various parts of the country.

The issue of local teachers who are bilingual in the children's first language and the second language to which the transition has to be made needs to be addressed at the planning stage itself. In some educationally backward areas it may be difficult to get qualified candidates for recruitment as teachers. Several programmes in India and across the world have recruited local candidates with inadequate educational qualification, and then carried out intensive induction and in-service training programmes. Over a period of time, such teachers should also acquire the requisite qualifications to become regular teachers. In multilingual situations, where the first objective of the teacher is to be able to understand what the children from some other first language backgrounds are saying and to make them feel comfortable, the school should be allowed to engage *language assistants* who could help as interpreters in the communication between the teachers and some children. Also, teacher recruitment and placement policies would need to be modified to ensure that in all such areas it is possible to recruit and place local teachers as per need.[8]

NOTES

1. Programmes that plan a very early transition to L2, without a continued commitment to development of the children's L1 are not appropriate.

2. This is unlikely to be accepted even in inter-state border situations where the two languages may both have social prestige. The speakers of the state official language would not agree to send their children to a school where two languages are learnt and used simultaneously as mediums of instruction. This issue was discussed by the research team in some inter-state border areas during the field work.

3. An evaluation of the bilingual educational programme in Eritrea in 2002, quoted in Nadine Dutcher, *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies* (2004) 63-65, brought out the following:

   (i) Almost two-third of the students are not able to read in the mother tongue by the end of grade 1.

   (ii) At the end of the grade 5, children were not ready with the required proficiency for shifting to English as the medium of instruction.

   The reasons identified for this result were: (a) Little pre-reading preparation for students going into grade 1; (b) Poor design of primers for grade 1; (c) Allocation of the least experienced and least qualified teachers to grade 1; (d) Mechanical teaching methods largely based on copying and rote memorization; and (e) Inadequate time allocated for teaching of English in the primary grades. The children are able to pick up a vocabulary of only about 1,000 words, which is grossly inadequate for the language used at the grade 6 level in all subjects. The following recommendations were made based on this evaluation:

   (i) Strengthen grade 1 with better trained and better paid teachers

   (ii) Add a transition year between grades 5 and 6 to raise the level of English proficiency of students entering grade 6.

   (iii) Develop a body of graded reading materials in all the local languages.

   (iv) Upgrade the teacher training programme by using better methods.

4. Integrated Child Development Services is a major programme under the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of India that provides a package of services for young children (0-6 years age) and pregnant, lactating mothers. The services include supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, referral services, nutrition and health education and pre-school education. This unique Programme presently benefits more than 37 million children and 7 million pregnant and lactating mothers.

5. During the fieldwork for this report, the team witnessed the woeful situation relating to teacher training and textbook development for the minority languages in the states of Assam, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

6. UNESCO is the only international organization that has espoused this cause. UNESCO, *Education in a Multilingual World* (2004), is a forceful statement on this issue. Some UNICEF documents also make a mention of this as an important learning issue.

7. A Block Resource Centre (BRC) is an academic support structure at the block level responsible for training and regular academic support to about 150-200 schools. Typically, a BRC has 4-7 good teachers as resource

persons who conduct training as well as visit schools regularly. A Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) covers about 8-12 primary schools. The CRC Coordinator is a good primary school teacher who visits schools regularly and holds monthly academic meetings of all teachers in the cluster.

8. Also, norms of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and state governments would need to allow engagement of additional teachers beyond the standard teacher: student ratio norms.

ACRONYMS

BRC	Block Resource Centre
CIIL	Central Institute for Indian Languages
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre
DIET	District Institutes of Education and Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
ECE	Early Childhood Education
IBE	Intercultural Bilingual Education
ICDS	Integrated Child Services Scheme
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NCERT	National Council for Educational Research and Training
OBC	Other Backward Castes
POA	Programme of Action
RL	Regional Language
SCERT	State Councils of Educational Research and Training
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TBE	Transitional Bilingual Education
TRI	Tribal Research Institutes
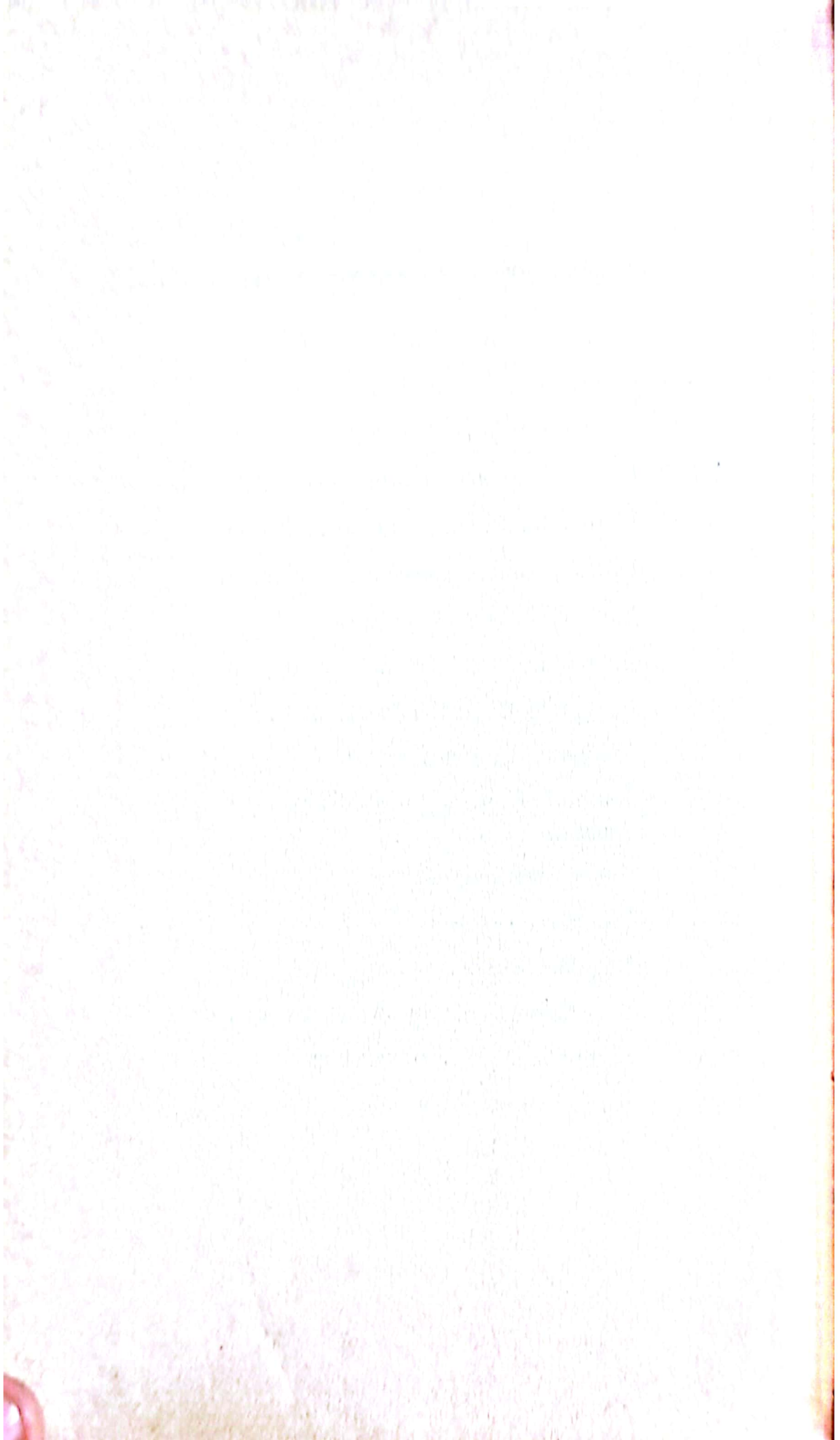
APPENDICES

OVERVIEW OF STATE STUDIES

Objective

Detailed case studies were undertaken in four states (Assam, Gujarat, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh) with the following objectives:

1. Provide an outline of the linguistic diversity across regions within the state. To prepare a simple linguistic profile of the district and the block selected for the fieldwork. The variation in dialects, prevalence of contact or link languages and incidence of bilingualism or multilingualism to be recorded.

2. Provide an overview and categorization of school language situations based on the children's first language backgrounds, teachers' language proficiencies and the medium of instruction.

3. Identify geographical areas, and prepare maps showing areas where children face an adverse situation in the early years of primary education owing to the use of an unfamiliar language as the medium of instruction.

4. Record perceptions of state, district and block level academic personnel and educational administrators on the issue of language of instruction. Also perceptions of teachers on this issue.

5. Outline initiatives at state or district level for addressing the language issue. Understand the policy of the state regarding the use of minority languages as mediums of instruction.

6. Understand the perception of selected communities and their representative organizations, especially in tribal areas, and

the demand, if any, for the use of local language as the medium of instruction.

7. Understand the demand for teaching of English.
8. Observe and document the use of different languages for classroom transaction including formal and informal communication between the teacher and children. Understand teachers' attitude towards children of minority language/ethnic background.
9. Attempt to understand the nature of learning difficulties faced by children who have a very different first language through observation of classroom transaction and conduct of simple assessment activities with children of grade 1 and 5.

Location of fieldwork

State	District	Block
Assam	Goalpara	Balijana
Gujarat	Dahaud	Devagarh Baria, Dhanpur
Madhya Pradesh	Chhindwara	Bichhua
Orissa	Gajapati	Guma

Each State Coordinator spent 8-10 days in the field. This included 2-3 days at the state and district levels and 6-8 days for the block and school observation work.

Methodology

1. Interaction with state level administrators and programme implementation personnel at the Directorate of Elementary Education and State Project Office of SSA. Interaction with academic personnel of SCERT and Tribal Research Institute.
2. Interaction with district and block level academic resource persons and educational administrators.
3. Visits to at least five-seven villages in the identified block and interaction with teachers, Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) coordinators and villagers.
4. Conduct of detailed school and classroom observation over two days in each of the two schools in the identified block in each state. The scope of the work at the school included

classroom observation, teachers' interviews, focus group discussions with children and parents, collection of basic information about the school and conduct of activities for assessment of learning levels of children of grade 1 and 5, with a focus on language learning.

Outputs

1. State level report.
2. District and block level report.
3. State, district and block maps showing patterns of language diversity.
4. Detailed school observation report for each of the two schools.

Case Studies

Three detailed case studies were undertaken to provide an in-depth analysis of selected initiatives in the states of Orissa and Assam.

a) Orissa : *Preparation and introduction of the Saora Primer*
b) Orissa : *Attitudinal training of teachers working in tribal areas.*
c) Assam : *Socio-linguistic mapping*

The focus of the studies was as follows:

1. Description of the initiative and the process of implementation.
2. Its current status and the possibility of replication on a larger scale.
3. What are the issues and problems in scaling-up?

Additional District Studies

District profiles of two more districts were prepared by documenting linguistic diversity and the variety of school language situations. These districts are:

1. Raigarh, in Chhattisgarh
2. Murshidabad, in West Bengal

SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Detailed school and classroom observation studies were conducted in two schools in each of the identified blocks. Thus, eight schools were observed over a period of two to three days each. The schools were selected in the identified block by ensuring that each school had a language situation that is representative of the situation prevalent in a fairly large number of schools in the block. The two schools were selected to represent two different situations of children's first languages and teachers' language proficiencies.

Objective

1. Observe the language used for instruction and informal communication by the teacher, and the extent of use of the children's first language.
2. Observe the effect of use of the local language (or the lack of it), in the teaching process, on the ability of children to participate in classroom interaction.
3. Understand the classroom teaching process, especially the language teaching methodology.
4. Study teachers' attitudes towards minority language/ethnic background children.
5. Gauge the learning difficulties faced by the children who belong to a very different first language background. The focus was on the problems that children face in the first year in school.
6. Assessment of the learning levels of children in grade 1 and 5 in language competencies.

Methodology

Detailed schedules and guidelines were used for each of the following activities:

- Interview with the teachers
- Classroom observation
- Assessment activities:

a) With five children from each of the language groups in grade 1

b) Whole-class assessment activities with grade 5 children

c) Additional assessment activities with five children from each of the language groups in grade 5

- Semi structured interviews with five children from each of the language groups in grade 5

- Group Discussion with teachers from the same school, or if possible, teachers of a cluster in a monthly meeting

- Interviews with parents of the identified children in each language group of grade 5.

As a first step, children belonging to different first language backgrounds were identified in each school. This identification helped to observe the nature of interaction of the teacher with children of different language and social backgrounds and also to compare the performance of children with different first language backgrounds. For the assessment activities, five children from each of the first language backgrounds were selected randomly in grades 1 and 5. In schools where the number of children with a particular first language were few in number, a minimum of two children were selected for the learning assessment activities.

In grade 1, the focus of assessment was on- (a) children's ability to name common objects in the school language and their first language, and (b) their ability to comprehend a simple story familiar to them and relate it in the school language/ mother tongue.

In grade 5, the focus was on assessment of (a) fluency in reading, (b) command over vocabulary in the school language, (c) reading comprehension of a simple passage, (d) ability to write simple answers to questions based on the passage, and (d) their ability to comprehend simple word-problems in mathematics. The difficulty level of the text used for assessing reading fluency and reading comprehension was equivalent to

that of texts appearing in the later part of the grade 2 language textbooks.

Report

Each school wise report included the following details:

- Language background of children in the classroom.
- Use of language in the classroom.
- Teacher's perceptions around the language issue.
- Parents' perceptions of the language problem.
- Performance of children on different tasks and activities with a detailed account of performance of different language groups.
- Comparison of the performance of different language groups based upon classroom observation and the assessment activities. The analysis of the assessment activities was not confined to the statement of the range of scores. In each school, a qualitative record was made of the learning issues and problems as they became evident during the classroom observation and the conduct of assessment activities.
- State Coordinator's understanding of the language issue in each school and also a comparison between the two schools.

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